PERCEPTIONS OF GRADE TEN LEARNERS IN THE TONGAAT AREA OF CAREER GUIDANCE

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this whole dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is the writer's original work

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DATE 1999-04-01

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore career guidance needs and perceptions of grade 10 learners. An attempt was made to examine what is currently offered in career guidance and what learners would like included in career guidance programmes. This would be explored in the light of what the theory says about the needs of adolescents i.e. how do career guidance programmes (current and desired) match the postulated needs of the adolescent. The validity of considering learners' needs and perceptions relates to the relevance and effectiveness of such career guidance programmes.

The sample consists of 100 grade 10 learners drawn from a coeducational secondary school in the Tongaat area. To facilitate learners' career needs, a primarily qualitative approach was adopted. Learners were asked to write a descriptive essay on (a) What is currently offered in career guidance? and (b) What do you want to learn in career guidance so that the lessons will be helpful to you? (Euvrard, 1996). The research design sought to determine the *expressed* career needs of the learners.

The results of the study were discussed in the light of current theoretical perspectives on career guidance and developmental psychology. The themes that have emerged from the study confirm the need for a developmentally-contextual approach to career education. This perspective underscores the dynamic interaction between the individual and the individual's contexts. Career guidance programmes need to take cognisance of current changes occuring in society for purposes of relevance and sustainability

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Career guidance is acknowledged as an integral component of the school guidance and counselling services which should be an essential ingredient of the system of differentiated education in South Africa (Interim Core Syllabus for Guidance, Department of Education, 1995). Yet for a variety of complex and varied reasons, the reality is that in many secondary schools young people are making career decisions without comprehensive career programmes and without the help of trained school guidance counsellors (Mtolo, 1996).

Career guidance programmes should be responsive to the needs of those they are designed to serve. This study attempts to focus on the perceptions and needs that grade 10 learners have of career guidance programmes. According to Chuenyane (1981) 'needs assessment' refers to formal attempts at determining what learners need in order to facilitate their growth and development. Students' career needs and perceptions are continually evolving. These changes may be attributable to complex personal, social, psychological and economic forces. Those factors learners perceive to be important must be taken into account when planning and designing school career programmes

Euvrard (1996) maintains that the focus on career needs of learners has implications for curriculum development. The literature review indicates that this is an area in which there is a paucity of research in South Africa (Taylor cited in Euvrard, 1996). Euvrard (1996) further maintains that in South Africa it seems the world of our youth is not acknowledged. He states that nowhere in the Human Sciences Research Council Report (1981) is there mention of the importance of need assessment studies. More specifically, no mention is made of the critical importance of finding out what learners themselves feel they need to learn through the guidance programme.

In this particular period of a new democratic South Africa, Naicker (1994) maintains that career guidance services in schools are being challenged to provide services which seek to address the needs of not only the privileged but also the disadvantaged sections of the population. Naicker (1994) maintains that it is also necessary to examine critically the current practices and assumptions upon which career counselling in schools are based.

According to Watson & Stead (1993) South African society is undergoing rapid social change. This is precipitated not only by political developments but also by industrial and technological developments which has resulted in greater diversity of occupations. Hartman (cited in Stead &Watson, 1993) argue that such change has resulted in many black adolescents making career choices that are based on trial-and-error simply because they lack both occupational information and the ability to integrate such knowledge with self-knowledge.

This research emanates from the writer's interest in career guidance and from her concern about the apparent lack of comprehensive career guidance programmes for learners which she has noted during her secondary school teaching. In addition it has been her experience that at secondary school level, school guidance is marginalised and in most schools it is non-existent. The reasons are both varied and complex. This certainly does not facilitate the process of self-understanding which Chuneyane (1981) maintains is the single most important goal of school guidance programmes.

1.2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CAREER GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The history of career guidance in South Africa has its roots in the 1940's (de Haas, 1991). It was formalised through the Education Act of 1967 (Act 39 of 1967, as amended in Act 73) which stipulated that education should be provided in accordance with the proficiency, aptitude and interest of every learner as well as with the needs of the country. This act adds that suitable guidance should be given to every learner. This legislation made a place for career guidance in South Africa (Jacobs et al, 1991: 22-23).

The history of School Guidance and Counselling should be seen within the context of the past government's policy of an apartheid society. According to Euvrard (1996), guidance and counselling services have a chequered history in South Africa. While Coloured, White and Indian Education Departments have developed structures and programmes over the past twenty to forty years, formal guidance was introduced into the Black schools only in 1981 (Naicker, 1994).

The investigation into the provision of education in South Africa, in particular, the publication of the report by the Guidance Work Committee: 1981 (Human Sciences Research Council); recommended that two clearly distinguishable

components of school guidance, General School Guidance and Career Guidance be retained and developed. This recommendation was accepted in the White Paper (1981) (Jacobs et al, 1991).

According to Naicker (1994) the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) report conceptualised guidance as a comprehensive programme of services that is both systematic and preventative. This report has identified a model of regional centres functioning with specialised personnel such as psychologists and guidance counsellors. He maintains that this model is worth exploring in the face of fiscal restraints. However, little is known about the present state of guidance and counselling services in the current education system in South Africa.

The most recent Schools Act, which became effective in January 1997, makes clear provision for a range of career guidance issues to be implemented in a flexible and comprehensive manner (Akhurst & Mkhize, in press, 1999). The Interim Core Syllabus for Guidance (Department of Education, 1995) has been superceded by Curriculum 2005 where career guidance forms part of one of the eight Learning Areas, viz., Life Orientation (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999). The nature of career planning is emphasised as an assessment criterion at both the intermediate and senior secondary phases.

In the face of the current government's rationalisation and redeployment of personnel policies, many secondary schools are currently functioning without qualified guidance counsellors. Furthermore formal guidance has generally been accorded minimal status as reflected by organizational structures and administrators; and teachers who are ill-equipped to handle the professional demands involved (Lombo, 1993).

Historically, black learners have viewed guidance with suspicion as it was introduced at a time when the government was using whatever means were at its

disposal to control the political unrest in the township schools (Nonyukela, in Euvrard 1996). Thus Black learners perceived school guidance as a political ideology of the government to perpetuate social control.

In terms of career guidance aims, Burns (1986) maintains that career guidance in most South African schools is seen mainly as a directing and controlling process, characterised by socialisation and social control, rather than by the strengthening of personal and individual qualities. The NEPI report (1992),

indicates that the introduction of guidance services in many African schools has been resisted because they have been perceived to perpetuate social control according to the ideology of the State. In addition career guidance had a marginal status in schools (Mtolo, 1996).

Thus it can be seen that school guidance, (of which career guidance is an integral component) emerges from a complex history riddled with problems.

1.3. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The definitions given below are attempts to clarify the use of terms in the study, and to illustrate current trends.

1.3.1. Career rather than vocation

Crites (1981:11) proposes that the term career is contemporary. It has increasingly supplanted vocational to designate and encompass the developmental nature of decision making as a lifelong process. Secondly, career is generally more inclusive than vocation, which has not only special connotations (such as vocational-technical education), but also historical meanings that are sometimes confused with choice as a calling.

Balcombe (1995: 23) defines career as:

> The totality of work a person does in his or her lifetime.
> Other related life roles such as those related to family,
> community, leisure, and retirement are included in a
> career.

1.3.2. Guidance and Counselling

In order to provide a conceptual framework for the study, it is necessary to define guidance and counselling. In South Africa the two terms are often confused or taken to mean the same thing whereas they refer to different categories; the confusion often arises because the same teacher may undertake both activities.

The Human Sciences Research Council's Work Committee (1981:5), provided an operational definition of guidance which outlines:

> Guidance .... is a practice, a process of bringing the pupil into contact with the world of reality in such a way that he acquires life-skills and techniques which allow him to direct himself competently (i.e. to become self-actualising) within the educational, personal, and social spheres and the world of work, in order to progress and survive effectively.

According to Mortensen and Schmuller (1976:3) guidance may be defined as "that part of the educational programme that provide, as needed, the opportunities and specialised services so that all students can develop to the fullest of their particular abilities and capacities in terms of the democratic concept."

Avent (1988: 5) defines guidance as the process by which the education of boys and girls is developed by a combination of classroom sessions and individual tutorial work. Learners need guidance about the new subjects they will be studying, the arrangements for pastoral care, the range of extra-curricular activities and the increasing responsibility they will assume for their own education and development.

The above definitions of guidance incorporate aspects of lifeskills, competence and adjustment. They further include developing learners' capacities and perceive guidance as process which orientates learners to their education. Thus guidance is a useful umbrella term for the entire apparatus of information, encouragement and action to support learners throughout their secondary years.

Gibson and Mitchell (1986) define counselling as a 'one-to-one helping relationship that focuses on a person's growth and adjustment and problem-solving and decision-making needs. This process is initiated by establishing a state of psychological contact or relationship between the counsellor and counselee.' There is a more personal contact with the focus being on fulfilling individual needs.

In an attempt to distinguish between guidance and counselling, Crites (1981) maintains that counselling refers specifically to an interpersonal process focused upon assisting an individual to make an appropriate decision. Guidance often has the connotation of a comprehensive programme orientation that may or may

not involve closer communication between educator and learner.

Within the South African context there are two structural components of guidance in schools which were part of the former House of Delegates school system. Firstly, the teacher-counsellor offers an individual, one-to-one counselling service to learners or group counselling sessions with a number of learners experiencing similar issues. Secondly, the learners attend weekly classroom lessons, called guidance, when the teacher-counsellor is expected to facilitate discussions, workshops, conduct lessons, give information giving on topics of relevance to the learner needs (Naicker, 1994).

1.3.3. Career Education and Career Guidance

Career guidance according to Avent (1988) is one aspect of the total guidance programme and consists of cognitive learning, skills acquisition and the gradual development of attitudes and understanding related to the ideas about the working world. It is designed to help individual learners and sometimes adults to decide upon a selection of possible future occupations and also to help them to appreciate the aspirations of others.

Avent (1988) goes further to say that career education is undertaken by mainstream teachers as an integral part of the curriculum whereas careers guidance may be given by teachers or by careers officers. The latter are specifically trained in interview techniques and have opportunities to acquire detailed knowledge of the requirements of courses and occupations at all levels. This a model from England, in South Africa career education and career guidance are not separated in schools and most mainstream teachers do not regard career education as part of their responsibility.

In South Africa according to Jacobs, Van Jaarsveld, & Von Mollendorf (1991) career guidance plays an important role in ensuring that each learner makes meaningful choices in accordance with his/her aptitude, interest and personal potential. This implies that every young person will be helped to -

a) explore his/her own personal potential;
b) explore educational and occupational opportunities;
c) cultivate a positive occupational and labour attitude;
d) make a meaningful occupational choice in the light of the country's
   labour needs.

Jacobs, Jaarsveld & Mollendorf (1991) maintain that 'career guidance' refers to the accountable orientation of every young person toward self-orientation by realising his/her opportunities until, within the limits of his/her personal potential and related occupational opportunities and in the light of his/her own view of labour, he can choose a reliable occupation on his own responsibility as a preclude to entering an occupation.

However, the history of career of guidance in South Africa arose from a system of racial segregation, shrouded in suspicion. Currently little is being done in this province to elevate the status of career guidance by policymakers. Career guidance as described above is undertaken in a minority of schools. In the majority of schools, career guidance is often limited to a visit or a guest speaker with little reference to the personal needs, aspirations or attributes of the learner.

For the purposes of this research study, the writer will use the terms career guidance and guidance teacher as the terms used in most South African schools.

1.3.4. The Grade Ten Learner

The aim of the study is to ascertain the career needs and perceptions of grade 10 learners. Therefore an understanding of their life-world becomes essential. Their developmental stage is referred to as "adolescence." Therefore a consideration of the nature of adolescence is important so as to appreciate more fully the context in which their career needs arise.

Ambron (in Manaster, 1989) presents a comprehensive definition of adolescence:

> Adolescence is the bridge between childhood and
> adulthood. It is a time of rapid development: of growing
> to sexual maturity, discovering one's real self, defining
> personal values, and finding one's vocational and social
> directions.

This definition emphasises adolescence as a period of self-discovery and change, when obtaining awareness of the world of work and the need to make personal decisions become important to the learner.

In the main, the grade 10 learner would refer to a secondary school learner who is approximately 15 to 16 years of age. In the South African school context, the

grade 10 learner may not necessarily refer to the above age range but to older learners. This may be as a result of learners who were disadvantaged in that they were denied access to educational opportunities in the past. Hence these learners are entering the education system at age levels that are not necessarily commensurate to school levels.

Grade 10 learners were selected as the target group for this study because they are at the beginning of the final phase of their formal schooling. This phase is to be termed the Further Education Phase (Curriculum 2005, Department of Education: 1997) and is more specifically directed towards career issues.

1.4. THE NEED FOR CAREERS GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Stead & Watson (1993) maintain that South African research that has investigated the level of learners' occupational knowledge is sparse. Nel & De Bruin (in Stead & Watson 1993) found that only five percent of all research has focused on occupational information. This lack of occupational information can be seen as a critical factor in the discrepancy between the occupational preferences of black adolescents and the realities of the economy.

Chuenyane (1981) undertook research with black secondary school learners (grades ten and twelve) in the Transvaal Province. His study aimed at determining career guidance needs and the extent to which these needs were being met. In terms of his findings, 93.1% of learners expressed a need for finding jobs and careers. Approximately 88.9% felt this need was not being met. On the basis of these findings the author suggests that an organised programme of career guidance would be a practical approach to making educational experiences more relevant to the needs of youth. In 1983, Chuenyane proposed that one way to alleviate the need for occupational information is to establish career information resource centres.

Researchers in African countries like Nigeria have embarked on needs assessment studies in the belief that 'if the educational, vocational and personal counselling needs of these students are delineated and adequately addressed, there may be a reduction in student drop-out rate and unemployment' (Ahia & Bradley, in Euvrard, 1996). South African educational authorities also claim to realise the importance of addressing the career needs of learners and this is reflected both in national Education Acts and in departmental workshops on guidance. Career information has traditionally been identified as an important

way of providing career guidance, however this is only one aspect of career guidance (Akhurst, Jassat, Belgraver, in press, 1999)

In a South African context, Euvrard (1996) maintains that career guidance needs are considered by many counsellors and senior learners to be the most important ones in comparison with other guidance needs. Among learner needs most commonly mentioned are those for career information and resources for helping in choosing a career (Cherry and Gear, 1987; Chuenyane, 1983) and for work experience (France, 1991). Modern work in the field shows that career decision making, career planning and conceptualisation of career as more than a choice are all important aspects of career guidance. The context of career choice in South Africa reveals that the learner may choose a particular career path only to find no openings, or job opportunities or funding. One such example refers to the teaching profession, where current graduate teachers, have to deal with the harsh reality of little or no employment opportunities.

According to Euvrard (1996) the international literature on school guidance, affirms that the main aim of effective guidance programmes is to address the needs of the learner population. Needs assessments are thus necessary. According Eurvrard (1996) a needs assessment can be defined as the "systematic appraisal of type, depth, and scope of problems as perceived by study of targets or their advocated" (Rossi & Freeman in Euvrard : 462). In order to meet both learners' needs and to keep their interest and motivation, career programmes need to be responsive to the context.

The issue of needs assessment is well expressed by Pietrofesa (1982:469) who asks, "Is there a close match between what the guidance programme intends to achieve and what students actually need?" In South Africa at present this question is difficult to answer, for little research has been done into what learners need (Euvrard, 1992). Further according to Euvrard (1992) research studies concerned with needs assessment in guidance settings in other countries all emphasise the importance of finding out what the learners themselves say about their needs.

In the current climate of South African education tension exists on one hand between the rationalisation of services and limited resources and the need to embark on a programme of reconstruction and development as we move away from an authoritarian apartheid system towards a more democratic one. Consequently the need to consider learners' career needs is vital in planning and implementing appropriate career guidance programmes.

1.5. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Following this introductory chapter which outlined the background to the study as well as the history of career guidance in South Africa, a literature review will be undertaken in chapter two. This involves discussions of a developmental perspective on career guidance, career development in adolescence and a literature review of studies in the United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) and in South Africa. Chapter three outlines the research design and the methodological procedures followed in this study. In chapter four the analysis of results will be the primary theme. The penultimate chapter will focus on the discussion of these findings, linking them to theoretical background reviewed earlier, as well as a discussion of limitations and recommendations of the study. Chapter six will contain the conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to provide a developmental perspective of the adolescent with particular focus on career development. Theory pertinent to a process-oriented approach to career development will be discussed first. This will be followed by research findings relevant to career guidance needs and perceptions of the adolescent. In this way the researcher intends to provide a contextually sensitive framework to locate the study.

2.1. DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVES ON CAREER GUIDANCE

According to Bimrose and Wilden (1994), the practice of career guidance was informed and underpinned by developments in the theoretical basis of career guidance. During the 1950's and 1960's, theories originating from other academic disciplines, such as developmental psychology and sociology, emphasised both the importance of maturational process of individuals and the context in which occupational choice occurred. The developmental framework began to influence the practice of careers guidance by the 1970's

Newman (1982) recommended in her study that in South Africa, career counsellors must work within a developmental framework to career counselling. She found that a developmental career counselling programme had a positive impact on career maturity and decision-making. This is echoed by Watson and Stead (1998).

In examining career guidance within a developmental framework, it must be acknowledged that the developmental theories are essentially Eurocentric in origin. As such they may not necessarily correspond to the maturational stages/tasks of the learner within a South African context, since there are socio-cultural and political factors unique to South Africa.

2.2.   PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACHES

According to Weinrach (1979) most process-oriented approaches are based on the assumption that career guidance should be aware of an individual's life and developmental phases. They regard career development as part of a process that takes place over a period of time. Occupational choice is therefore the result of

consecutive decisions made during specific phases in a person's life.

Theoreticians of the process approach, stress the importance of mastery of developmental tasks during certain phases of life to attain occupational maturity and accompaning readiness to make a meaningful occupational choice. The importance of self-concept, developmental experiences, personal background, and psycho-social environment are recognised as major determinants of the process-oriented approach. In the work of career development theorists, the influence of Ginzberg (1951); Super (1957); Erikson (1963); and Havighurst (1973) are acknowledged.

Ginzberg, Ginzburg, Axelrad and Herma (1951) were among the first to describe career development as a process. They identified three stages in the development process:

Fantasy - the period from birth to 10 years.
Tentative - ages 10 to 16 years.
            Subdivided into: interests, abilities, values and transition
Realistic - ages 17 until approximately 21 years.
            Subdivided into: exploration, crystallisation, and specification

In Weinrach (1979), Ginzberg reformulated this theory and modified some of the previous concepts. Adjustments to the original theory include:

a) Occupational choice is a process that remains open-ended as long as the individual has to make decisions about his career.
b) Occupational choice is a reversible process as specific factors can cause occupation-related behavior or decisions to be changed. Practical considerations such as the cost and length of training often make people reconsider.
c) An individual's attitude towards compromise is replaced by the approach of optimalisation, because practising an occupation is dynamic and continually strives for the best balance between an occupation and the person's ever-changing desires and circumstances.

In the light of the above, this study will focus on career needs and perception of learners who are in the tentative stage. The above modified theory places greater emphasis on the socio-psychological factors that might impact on individual career development. How the learners reconcile developmental tasks in relation to specific factors and the meanings that they generate will be examined.

2.3.   THE THEORY OF DONALD SUPER

In understanding Super's theory issues of career development and career maturity will be briefly discussed as the life span of the individual. Super's theory (1957) proposed that career choice proceeds through a series of developmental stages.

People differ in their abilities, interests and personality. In addition people and occupation are brought together on the basis of their unique patterns. The individual's career pattern, in other words his/her history can be summarised in a series of stages, namely those of growth, exploration, settlement, maintenance and deterioration. Hence the individual's career pattern as reflected in the phases, is determined by parent's socio-economic status, intellectual, personality traits and the exposure to opportunities.

Super maintains that essentially the process of occupational development is the development and the implementation of the self-concept. The process of obtaining a compromise between individual, and social sectors and between self-concept and reality is one of role-playing, regardless of whether the role is played in the imagination or in real-life situations.

Thus it can be said that Super's developmental theory established an organised and systematic view of career development, self-concept and occupational maturity. With the aid of Super's theory, career guidance teachers can determine a child's phase of life and level of occupational maturity during the career development process. It is relevant to this study to assess learners' career needs and perceptions in relation to their career maturity.

2.3.1. The Concept of Career Maturity

Career maturity is a key construct within the developmental perspective of career development. It has become central to theory and research on career development (Crites, 1971).

While it was Crites (1971) who coined the term 'career maturity', the concept had been introduced years earlier by Super (1955) who referred to it as 'vocational maturity.' Super (1973: 3) defines career maturity as:

> …. the readiness to cope with the developmental tasks
> of one's life stages, to make socially required career decisions,

and to cope appropriately with the tasks with which society
confronts the developing youth and adult.

As key participants in the career guidance process, acknowledging learners' contributions are invaluable in planning and implementing career guidance programmes. This would augment and facilitate those processes in the client that are conducive to greater career maturity.

Brown & Brooks (1990: 207) maintain that

> career maturity is a constellation of physical, psychological
> and social characteristics: psychologically, it is both cognitive
> and affective. It includes the degree of success in coping with
> demands of earlier stages and substages of career development.

They further propose that career maturity is a hypothetical construct, in that it's operational definition is difficult to formulate as is that of intelligence. Also its achievements are even less definitive. However they maintain that development through the life stages can be guided, partly by facilitating the maturing of abilities and interests and partly by aiding reality testing.

Brown & Brooks (1990: 210) contend that the concept of career maturity sought to devise:

a) a basis for describing and assessing the stage of career development reached by students of differing ages and grades.
b) the types of career development tasks they were confronting and how they confronted them.
c) their readiness for career decisions.

The concept was closely tied, not to that of biological development, but rather to that of developmental tasks, as used by Buehler (1933) and as conceived by Havighurst (1954). Developmental tasks are those with which society confronts individuals when they reach certain levels of biological, educational, and vocational attainment.

According to Crites (1981) during the course of career counselling, what takes place in the contacts between client and counsellor depends upon the point the client has reached on the continuum of career development. The counsellor must first determine the career life stage of the client and assess his or her degree of

career maturity. If the client is relatively immature in career behavior, as compared with his or her age or peers, then developmental counselling in adolescence concentrates upon the orientation and exploration which precede decision making and reality testing within the process of career development. With the career-immature client, Super and Overstreet (1960:157) observe that:

> It is not so much counselling concerning choice, as counselling
> to develop readiness for choice, to develop planfulness.
> It involves helping (the client) to understand the personal,
> social, and other factors which have a bearing on the making of
> educational and vocational decisions, and how they may operate
> in his own vocational development.

The overall process of career development progresses from orientation and readiness for career choice to decision making and reality testing, and the Developmental Career Counsellor initiates counselling at that point in the process which the client has reached.

Crites (1981: 128) highlights a more inclusive goal of developmental career counselling proposed by Super (1955) is that 'this is best done by building on the individual's assets, by working with his strengths rather than his weaknesses.'

Crites maintains that this hypothesis builds upon the emphasis that developmental psychology places upon growth potentialities in the personality. Rather than necessarily attempting to correct a client's weaknesses, Developmental Career Counselling capitalises upon strengths.

Both Brown et al (1990) and Crites (1981) indicate that a component of career maturity is an adaptation to realism. This is a mixed affective and cognitive entity best assessed by combining personal, self-report, and objective data. Realism is thus a "trait" not well measured by any one instrument.

Van der Merwe (1993) in exploring selected correlates of career maturity in black high school students, recommends that exposure to career guidance is significantly related to, and seems to be a predictor of career maturity. Students who have been exposed to career guidance tend to more career mature. In addition Freeman (1995) and Van der Merwe (1993) both maintain that career maturity is positively related to career aspirations and goal-directedness of learners respectively.

Thus career maturity as a key developmental construct has implications for understanding learners' career needs and perceptions. This has significance for the development of career guidance programmes. Career guidance counsellors need to identify what factors within careers guidance are useful in raising career maturity, particularly in an educationally disadvantaged population, the thrust of careers guidance may be a crucial element in promoting career development.

2.4. CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENCE

Some of the theoretical conceptualisations and major developmental concerns affecting adolescence is necessary to determine career guidance needs of senior secondary learners.

The concept of developmental tasks is incorporated into many developmental theories of career development. According to Maher & Thompson (1980), applying a developmental framework to the process of guidance as a means of determining what tasks learners should seek to develop at certain points in their lives, entails an awareness of the developmental framework of the adolescent years. It is the 12-18 year period of learner's lives with which most secondary school teachers and counsellors are concerned.

Manaster (1989) suggests that knowledge of the developmental tasks is intended to help us understand adolescent development by clarifying "where" the adolescent is and how the adolescent feels.

Havighurst (1973) maintains that the developmental tasks provide the specific tasks that must be learned at each age stage in order to cope successfully with the life tasks. In Manaster (1989:15) he defines a developmental task as:

> a task which arises at or about a certain period
> in the life of the individual, the successful achievement
> of which leads to happiness and success with later tasks,
> and the failed achievement of which leads to unhappiness
> in the individual, disapproval by the society and difficulty
> with later tasks.

In Maher & Thompson (1980: 40) Havighurst separates the period of adolescence into two stages, early and late. For the purposes of this study the relevant developmental tasks of adolescence include:

a) setting realistic standards of achievement
b) learning to identify self as a responsible and productive worker
c) organising self and planning activities in accordance with a personally relevant value hierarchy.
d) establishment of identity as a worker
c) achieving emotional autonomy in learning to make decisions, choose values, and assume responsibilities independently of home and family.

Maher & Thompson (1980) advocate that developmentally rooted group guidance experiences, in this instance assessing career guidance needs and perceptions, as an ideal way for counsellors to integrate adolescent needs and life. The classroom is well suited as a workshop environment in which to promote positive growth.

Adolescence has been conceptualised as the stage of identity development by Erikson (1963). This stage begins in early childhood, but becomes a developmental crisis demanding resolution during the period of adolescence if a clear definition of identity is to achieved. Erikson (1959:92) maintains that 'in general it is primarily the inability to settle on an occupation identity which disturbs young people.' He seems to believe that the attainment of an occupational identity is crucial for the fulfillment of the definition of ego identity.

Erikson (1959: 92) in Tiedeman & O' Hara (1963) uses the term ego identity which is defined as, the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others. It is a psychosocial phenomenon wherein the development of sameness and continuity takes place in the early years largely in the family and school environment.

According to Erikson (1959: 89) 'The integration now taking place in the form of ego identity is more than the sum of the childhood identifications.' Ego identity also relates to the interpretation of the person within the wider social world and the world of work. The full impact of the social world and its approval or disapproval is more sweepingly felt in the period of the identity crisis. Here one experiences in a much larger measure freedom of choice with the consequences falling on the individual's shoulders rather than on those of parents or teachers.

Research carried out by Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney (1989) sought to investigate (a) the extent and nature to which career exploration is related to other aspects of exploration in late adolescence and (b) the nature and extent to which the occupational commitment process is related to the establisment of a coherent ego identity. As Erikson (1968) proposed, determining an occupational identity represents one of the central challenges of the identity formation process in adolescence. In addition career development theorists have suggested that the degree to which individuals are able to establish coherent career plans seems to be linked to their progress in forming a crystallized self-identity (Holland, 1985; Super, 1957).

Their findings suggest that individuals with a clear sense of their ego identity may continue to engage in career exploration to find a vocational outlet for this identity (Phillips, 1982; Super, 1980). The findings support the emerging rationale for integrating career development in the maintream of contemporaries developmental psychology wherein it may be useful to assess the relationship between the ego identity and such aspects of career development as self-concept crystallisation and career maturity. Finally the study by Blustein, Devenis and Kidney (1989) has demonstrated that the exploration and commitment processes in the identity formation and career development domain share close theoretical and empirical linkages.

According to Erikson (1968) failure to successfully resolve these developmental issues creates a sense of inferiority that will have a lasting impact upon the adolescent.

Career development in adolescence presents as a challenging and complex life-task. Identity formation is a vital process within career development. The application of a developmental framework helps to facilitate the assessment of learners' career needs and perceptions.

2.5. CAREER GUIDANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Avent (1988: 27) argues that several definitions have been published in recent years, but there is fairly general agreement that the aims and objectives of career work in secondary schools can be grouped under four headings. These include:

a) to develop educational awareness through knowledge of the courses available in schools and colleges. An understanding of the relationship

between the career choices a student may make and educational requirements for entry to them.

b) to provide information on the whole spectrum of possible occupation with an understanding of the difference between existence of a career, and the limited opportunities for pursuing it. At the same time students should learn to appreciate the lifestyle associated with different types of work and non-work.

c) to develop self-awareness through understanding of individual abilities and competencies as well as interests and values which may motivate people to a particular course of action. They should also acquire an appreciation of those qualities of personality and character which may lead to success in achieving one's educational and career aspirations.

d) to provide practice in decision-making and develop the necessary skills for coping with the transition from school to work, no-work, continued education and the services available to help them. They should understand the social and economic background to work and lifeskills to cope with job changes.

The Toronto Board of Education uses a model by Watts (in Balcombe, 1995) to illustrate the aims of career guidance. The graphical representation in the diagram provides an overview of the aims.
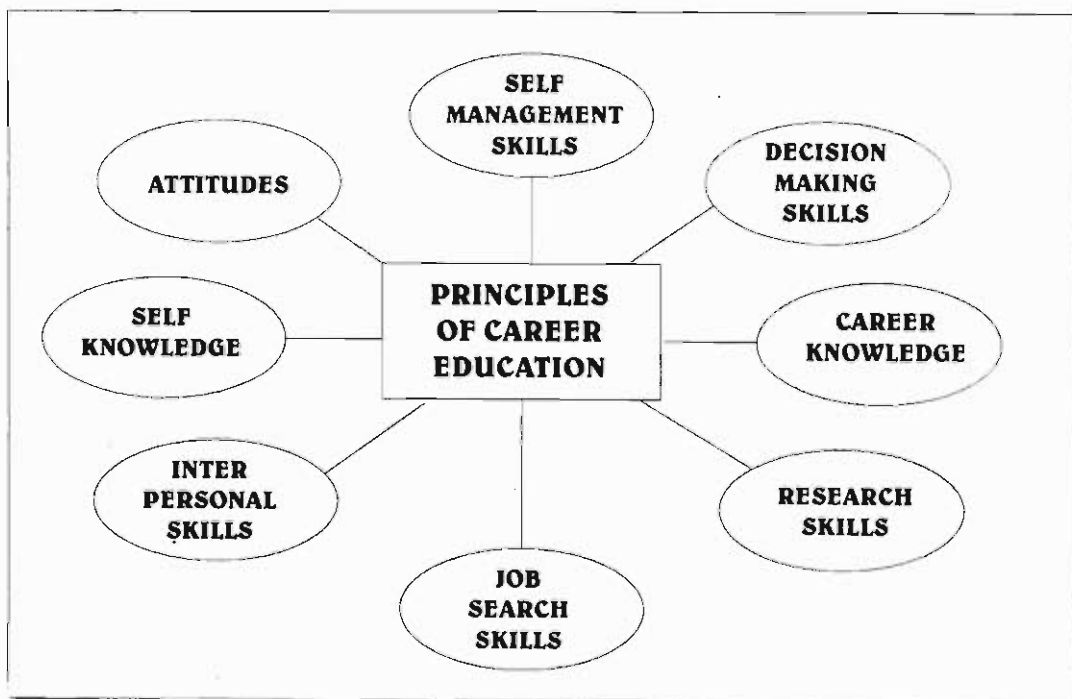
Figure 1. Principles of Career Education (from Balcombe, 1995:24)

Watts noted that the framework above describes the thinking for a workable guidance programme.

Self-Awareness - Watts (1988) cautions that the identities of people are dynamic and the role of the educator is to make students aware of this, particularly in the cases where students lead fairly restricted lives

Opportunity Awareness - Watts argues that opportunity awareness is not just the "job", but must also involve home role, leisure roles, and community roles.

Decision Learning - is defined in terms of acquiring the skills of decision-making. This involves the concepts of different styles of decision-making, collection and processing strategies and weighing probability versus desirability of selected careers.

Transition Learning - is an area which involves routine things as resume writing, interview strategies and application forms. Watts (1988) further states that job safety, rights, the structure of work and those important first few days on the job should also be addressed. He maintains that if students spend years on getting an education so as to be ready for entry into the world of work, it seems only just that some time be spent on the actual transition process.

The development of self-awareness, the provision of career information and the practice of decision-making skills constitute the core aims of career guidance. The need for transitional learning appears to be an area of interest directed towards to a more life-skills approach to career guidance. Thus the aims of career guidance are dynamic and fluid in view of the individual's interaction with the environment.

2.6. RELEVANCE OF STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Chuenyane (1981) had undertaken research with the purpose to determine the career guidance needs of black secondary school learners (grade 10 & 12) in the Transvaal Province. He also attempted to investigate the extent to which these needs were being met. In terms of his findings 93.1% of learners expressed a need for finding jobs and careers. Approximately 88.9% of learners felt this need was not being met. He concluded that black secondary school learners need career guidance services. He proposed that an organised programme of career guidance would be a practical approach to making educational experiences more

relevant to the needs of youth and to relating the school programme to what is going on in life.

Msimeki (1988) studied two groups of grade 11 learners in a rural area in the Transvaal. The experimental group participated in a ten-week guidance programme which served as the treatment. Both the treatment and control group did the pretest and the post-test, but the control group received no treatment. Change in the career development status of the two groups was measured by the Assessment of Career Development Test (ACD), developed by the American College Testing Programme. He concluded that the guidance programme that was presented to the target group, enhanced the career development of the learners. It apparently led to a significant increase in the learner's occupational awareness, and to an enhanced career planning and decision-making ability.

In Euvrard's (1992) study, learners were asked what they would like to learn in school guidance lessons. Well over half the learners (58%) of a sample 189 learners in grade 10, expressed the need for careers guidance. A number of distinct categories emerged from the data such as: What the different typed of careers available and what is the nature of each one? How do I choose which career is best for me? What educational qualifications are needed for the various careers. These were some of the issues which highlighted the need for effective career guidance programmes.

Another study by Euvrard (1996) entitled 'Career needs of Eastern Cape pupils in South Africa' focused on the expressed needs of the learners. The results revealed that over half (52%) of the learners wanted to discuss career matters. The major focus was upon learning about the careers themselves in greater depth, particularly those in which they had a special interest. In addition the learners wanted to know about the availability of certain careers, as well as the educational requirements. Euvrard maintains that the learner interest in careers confirms the findings of other similar research studies, and can probably considered a universal need of learners everywhere. The South African studies of Chuenyane (1981), Gama (1984) and McGregor (1988) all showed that learners are very interested in learning more about careers and the process of choosing wisely. In addition the need for careers guidance is supported by work being undertaken by the South African Vocational Guidance and Educational Association and the various educational policy units around the country.

Mtolo (1996) in her dissertation, 'Tertiary Students' Perceptions of Secondary School Career Guidance: A Consumer Perspective', maintains that students

receive inadequate exposure to career guidance at school. Of the greater number who did not receive enough assistance with career choice, 94% changed their secondary school career choice. Furthermore the respondents maintained that if they had adequate career guidance at school, they would have not wasted their time in tertiary institutions, changing from faculty to faculty or from course to course (trial and error) trying to locate a suitable career for themselves. Such findings support the need to investigate learner's perceptions and their needs for career guidance programmes.

Stead & Watson (1996) propose the developmental-contextual framework of career development (Vondracek, 1992; Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1983, 1986) in South Africa. They suggest this perspective underscores the dynamic interaction between the individual and individual's proximal (family, peers) and distal (sociocultural, economic) contexts. They maintain such an approach overcomes (a) an inordinate focus on either the individual or the individual's context and (b) emphasis on a unidirectional relationship between the self and context. Furthermore the developmental-contextual approach stresses the importance of understanding the individual-context interaction in terms of a development continuum that includes the past and present. Moreover this approach endorses a multidisciplinary approach to career research, incorporating both the individual's characteristics and economic, cultural, educational and sociopolitical factors.

Akhurst & Mkhize (1999, in press) maintain that career education must be responsive to the individuals for whom it is designed and must take their contexts into account. They further maintain that career education is particularly relevant in the exploration stage of an individual's career development (continues in the world of work as a young adult) and that a strong developmental perspective is necessary.

Van der Merwe (1993) found that exposure to career guidance was significantly related to career maturity. Oakley-Smith (1988), Mtolo (1996) and Ntshangase's (1995) findings reinforce the importance of career guidance programmes which considers the needs and perceptions of secondary school leavers.

2.7. RELEVANCE OF STUDIES IN THE UK & USA

Cherry and Gear (1987) undertook a study aimed at determining 'Young People's Perceptions of their Vocational Guidance Needs: Priorities and Pre-

occupations.' They maintained that greater understanding of learner perceptions and priorities would provide a sounder basis for interaction with young school-leavers. This study was aimed to produce a detailed description of the reported priorities and pre-occupations of young people who could be regarded as in some way typical of those encountered in the day-to-day work of the careers service. The validity of considering learners' perceptions may be assessed in two ways. First, although based on little experience, learner perceptions have an obvious relevance in that they will presumably influence the way in which careers education and guidance will be received: they are the basic material with which the adviser has to work and however ill-founded the learner's views cannot be ignored.

Second, any possible naivety in reported priorities can be tested against replies from more experienced people, represented by a follow-up sample. The main findings, despite two apparent problems are: firstly that that learners may have difficulty in expressing their perceptions of what they need.

Secondly the lack of labour-market experience of learners may be felt to limit the relevance of their own ideas for the planning of a careers programme. However there appears no reason to judge learners as having perceptions of needs that are irrelevant or inappropriate to the tasks facing them.

Bimrose and Wilden (1994:373) in their paper entitled 'Supervision in careers guidance: empowerment or control?' maintain that the 'British Government is clear that career guidance has, more than ever before, a vital role to play in lifting the quantity and quality of education and training to meet the skill needs of the 1990s and beyond.' In developing an appropriate framework for supervision they advocate that career guidance does not take place in a vacuum. It is subject to changes, pressures and demands from the workplace and from the people with whom it deals. Alongside this should be continued analysis of the underlying theoretical, ethical and ideological considerations of its practice. The major challenge for career guidance is a need to re-organise priorities to secure the future existence of the service.

Yee and Pawlovich (1988) in a paper entitled, Students' Perceptions of Compulsory Career Guidance Program, maintain that while program evaluation is consistent with sound educational practice, it is often difficult to do in the area of career guidance. According to Holland (in Yee & Pawlovich:1988) there are an abundance of career programs and ideas for helping students but little evidence about their actual effect. As a result, practitioners must select materials

and develop programs with very little concrete evidence to guide them. The researchers maintain that examination of learner perception has been viewed as an important facet of career guidance programme evaluation.

Canadian educationists and psychologists have made a notable contribution to the development of career guidance as a subject. According to Herring, (in McCormick 1995) there is limited information on the career needs and a lack of career awareness among clients. Essentially, there seems to be discrepancies between what clients wanted in a career and what they actually expected to achieve. He maintains that part of the problem is that career development theories do not include the important element of ethnicity in their models.

According to Axelson (1993:258) career development models are based on generalizations of 'middle-class and white male populations, since those are the groups that were most represented in many occupations that had the most opportunity for career expression and development.' In the South African context, given the diversities associated with multiculturalism, career guidance needs should not only reafffirm cultural values but consider the individual in the context of the community.

The Canadian Ministry of Education has made great strides in recognising the importance of secondary school career guidance programmes. Gullekson (1995:35) states that schools treat career planning as an event rather than a process. He suggest that if we are to recognise that career planning is a process which should reflect the developmental nature of the individual, we must:

a) use tools in a coherent well planned developmental approach,
b) recognise their limitations and use them as a source of information rather than as something which will give students "an answer"
c) allow students access to the various career planning tools when they see the need, not when it fits conveniently in the timetable,
d) and give the students a working knowledge of the career planning process.

A developmental career education process for all students from kindergarten to grade 12, should be the eventual goal. This would ensure a whole schools approach to career education. The reasons to support such an approach may be attributed to the fact that learners are required to make sophisticated decisions earlier in their education, for example course streaming at grade 7 level. Gullekson (1995) recommends the vision to integrate career development into all grade levels has merit but it is a process that will take time.

Gullekson (ibid) further highlights the dissatisfaction felt by young adults when asked to reflect upon the focus of their high school education. In one study, 33% of the high school graduates who had been out of school for two years felt that job search/career focus should have been the primary focus of their high school program (Krahn & Lowe, 1991). This lack of effectiveness of career guidance programmes may be due to school counsellors who have highly loaded job descriptions and cannot give adequate attention to learners' career planning needs. Students too lack knowledge to guide their own career planning and often delay the process until grade 12, by which time decisions may be irreversible.

Beck (in Balcombe:1995) states further that the positive intervention required to bring about increased career awareness does not come about with the odd 'career day', guest speaker or ad libbed comments from a teacher about a career. What is necessary is a well thought out developmental career guidance plan for the school. It requires a strong administrative support, motivating curriculum and the support of the classroom teachers. She acknowledges that this is a tall order, but certainly one that is a challenge to educators.

Watts (1994) describes new models of learning and work which have implications for career guidance. Within employment the traditional concept of a 'job for life' is dying. The pace of economic change means that organisations have to be prepared to change much more regularly and rapidly. They are less and less willing to provide security of tenure. In countries like the UK, Australia, and New Zealand they are moving towards a system of vocational qualifications based not on examinations in colleges but on assessment of performance in the workplace. This makes it possible to accredit and value all the learning that takes place on the job and in informal ways as well as that which takes place in the classroom. In short, both educational institutions and employers are now focusing increasingly on the interaction between learning and work. The notion of learning as separate from work is discredited. One works to learn; one learns to work. In a post-industrial world, a society that wishes to work must be a learning society.

Watts (1994) further maintains that these changes have powerful implications for the concept of 'career.' The traditional concept of 'career' as an orderly progression up graded hierarchical steps within an organisation or profession is dying. We are seeing the transformation of career as describing an individual's lifetime of learning. The 'career' is now owned by the individual: it is a process, not a structure.

Within the UK, career guidance is currently being given greater policy prominence. This stems significantly from a seminal report produced by the Confederation of British Industry entitled 'Towards a Skills Revolution' (1989). To achieve this there is a need to 'put individuals first' and to encourage them to develop their skills and knowledge throughout their working lives. The aim in the UK is to achieve lifelong access to guidance in support of lifelong learning and lifelong career development. In this way the concept of careership was coined.

Finally Watts (1995) advocates a process-oriented approach to career guidance. He maintains that the role of career guidance is potentially central and pervasive. If individuals are constantly to develop their learning and their work and regularly to negotiate their relationships with educational institutions, then guidance needs to available on a continuing basis.

A particularly powerful movement in British education at the moment is the introduction of regular recording of achievement and action planning by learners. Learners are regularly encouraged to review their learning experiences inside and outside the formal curriculum. They are also encouraged to identify and review their long-term and short-term career goals and ways of achieving these objectives.

2.8. THE NEED FOR PARADIGM SHIFTS IN CAREER GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Stead and Watson (1996) maintain that to date career research in South African has been centered primarily on the individual. In view of rapid changes taking place they suggest that historical, cultural, sociopolitical and economic factors be examined in tandem with career development of the individual. They have suggested a developmental-contextual approach (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, in Stead & Watson 1996) to explain career development as this approach focuses on the dynamic interplay between individual and contextual factors. The appropriateness of this approach is that it considers career development as being a lifespan phenomenon and examines career issues from a holistic view.

Kotze (1993) maintains that the traditional approach to career guidance rests on objective measuring instruments. This approach presupposes equal access to careers which is only now beginning to be realised in South Africa. The

disadvantage of standard career guidance tests is that they do not take sufficient cognisance of the context of the child. In particular the child whose life experiences lies largely outside the modern, Western industrial cultural complex within which tests are embedded. In South Africa large parts of the population are educationally disadvantaged, economically deprived and cultural backgrounds differ considerably. Hence career guidance should serve the socially, economically and politically disadvantaged and should not remain the preserve of the advantaged sections of the population.

Kotze (1993) proposes a contextual approach to career guidance which emphasises a process of attachment to meaning. Its point of departure is the assumption that there are different realities and that different meanings could be attached to the same event. This approach is well suited to the implementation of the principles of participation and empowerment, where context can be defined as an ecosystem in which human interactions, events, and objects obtain meaning. He adds that the scope of career guidance goes beyond the individual child and his/her career once there is a better understanding in the community of the matching of careers with development needs. Hence the concept of 'wholeness' is a key concept which refers to the interconnectedness of the child's emotional, intellectual, family, social, political, economical and school context (Kotze, 1993).

Naicker's (1994) socio-psychological model of career counselling further supports the need for a paradigm shift. He emphasises the interaction of psychological variables (personal characteristics) and sociological variables (social forces) which shape and influence career choices. The expectations are shaped in part by early socialisations through family, school experiences and, in part, by the perceived structure of opportunity. As changes occur in the structure of opportunity these may lead to modifications in expectations and these, in turn, to changes in career choices. Thus learners' individual interests and motivations need to be complemented with social, cultural and economic realities which affect choices.

Akhurst & Mkhize (1999, in press) emphasise career education in multiple contexts. They elaborate that a life-span approach to career development means that career education is an important aspect of any programme related to education and training.

In addition the authors suggest that the methodology for career education should be learner- rather than teacher- centred, incorporating the learners' thoughts,

feelings and behaviours. Such considerations facilitate the development of holistic career programmes and encourage learners to take responsibility for their career development.

In the light of the above views, it is evident that researchers in South Africa appear to advocating a more contextually relevant and systemically sensitive approach to career guidance. This approach is highly consistent with the views of De Jong and van der Hoorn (1994) who emphasise the systemic nature of the transformative potential of educational psychology in facilitating democracy in South Africa. A contextual/systemic approach to career guidance, underpinned by the principles of interconnectedness, interdependency and dynamic interactions is therefore proposed as one way of achieving effective career education.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. AIM OF STUDY

The primary purpose of the study is to find out what learners themselves feel they need to learn through career guidance programmes. Pietrofesa (1982: 469) expresses the problem clearly: 'Is there a close match between what the guidance program intends to achieve and what students need?' Euvrard (1992) maintains that in South Africa this question cannot be answered adequately as little research has been done into learners needs. He further asks whether our guidance programmes are **relevant** (own emphasis) to the actual needs of the learner.

The aim of this research is:
1) To determine learners' perceptions of what is currently offered in career guidance lessons;
2) To ascertain which topics learners request for career guidance.

3.2. METHODOLOGY

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:20) methodology is a theory or an analysis of how research should operate. The choice of method is determined by the chosen topic and the kind of data to be collected. The real issue is the idea of 'fitness for purpose'. King (in Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995) contend that there is no 'best method', and that we should suit our methods as closely as possible to the topic being discussed. In this study a qualitative methodology of research is suitable, in the light of the exploratory nature of the study.

In terms of assessing learners' career needs and perceptions, Euvrard (1996) maintains that the majority of studies in this field use a questionnaire where respondents tick a checklist or choose from a range of given options. Researchers have expressed misgivings about the appropriateness of such standard instruments and maintain that such efforts cannot reflect unique student needs and settings (Murray 1987). Russo & Kassera (1989) maintain that questionnaires designed according to researcher's perceptions of the problem may be in danger of preventing the learners perspective from emerging.

Euvrard (1992) suggests that in order to establish what learners themselves feel to be their needs, it is imperative that a methodological perspective be adopted to allow the findings to emerge from the material. These findings must be 'from the data itself - rather than from the preconceived, rigid structured, and highly quantified techniques that pigeonhole the empirical social world into operational definitions that the researcher has constructed.' (Filstead 1970:6). Hence the decision to choose a methodology from the qualitative paradigm.

Stead and Watson (1998) maintain that there has been an over-reliance on quantitative psychometric instruments among South African career researchers, who are inclined to impose questions that are largely derived from international theories and research on participants. Participants thus have little chance to expand on their views. They add that there has been minimal effort to use qualitative research methods in career research. While qualitative research is more time-consuming than quantitative research, it can be used to determine the meanings South African individuals give to constructs. Qualitative research could also enable researchers to provide more context rich research and focus more on respondent driven experiences.

3.3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH - UNDERLYING PHILOSOPY

Qualitative research can be defined as a particular orientation within the human and social sciences that 'fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms (Kirk & Miller, 1986: 9 in Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) offer the following generic definition of qualitative research:

> Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.
>
> Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, interviews - that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives. Accordingly qualitative researchers

deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand.

Thus qualitative research, as a set of interpretive practices, privileges no single methodology over any other. As a site of discussion, or discourse, qualitative research is difficult to define clearly. It has no theory, or paradigm that is distinctly its own (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:3).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1994) maintain that qualitative research then is ultimately a frame of mind, it is an orientation and commitment to studying the social world in certain kinds of way.

3.3.1. Key Characteristics of Qualitative Research

♦ According to Merriam (in Creswell, 1994) qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with **process**, rather than outcomes or products. The focus is upon natural, ordinary, routine everyday situations collecting unstructured data.

♦ Qualitative researchers are interested in **meaning-** how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world.

♦ The qualitative researcher is the **primary instrument** for the data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines.

♦ Qualitative research involves **fieldwork.** The researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.

♦ The process of qualitative research is **inductive** in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details.

Morse (in Creswell 1995) adds to the characteristics of a qualitative research problem:

♦ the concept is "immature" due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research;
♦ a notion that the available theory may be inaccurate, inappropriate, incorrect, or biased;

◆ a need exists to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory; or

◆ the nature of the phenomenon may not be suited to quantitative measure.

In qualitative research the investigator admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases, as well as the value nature of information gathered from the field. The language of qualitative research is distinctive including words such as understanding, discover, and meaning. It is personal, informal, and based on definitions that evolved during a study.

Following from the above assumptions of qualitative research, the methodology involves an inductive logic approach. Categories emerge from informants, rather than are identified **a priori** by the researcher. This emergence provides rich "context-bound" information leading to patterns or theories that help explain a phenomenon.

3.4. THE PLACE OF THEORY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In qualitative research the use of theory is less clear and the term for "theory" varies by the type of design. For example, theory is used by those conducting grounded theory studies as an outcome for their studies. They hope to discover a theory that is grounded in information from the informants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to 'pattern theories' as an explanation that develops during naturalistic or qualitative research. These pattern theories represent a "pattern" of interconnected thoughts or parts linked to a whole.

In a qualitative study, one does not begin with a theory to test or verify. Instead, consistent with the inductive model of thinking a theory may emerge during the data collection and analysis phase of the research or be used relatively late in the research process as a basis for comparison with other theories. Lather (in Cresswell (1994) qualified the use of theory:

> Building empirically grounded theory requires a reciprocal
> relationship between data and theory. Data must be allowed to generate
> propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori
> theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from
> becoming the container into which the data must be poured.

A theory may not be a "container" because it does not fit a particular situation.

One needs to build a new theory by using an inductive model of thinking or logic, as shown in the following figure:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│     Researcher Develops a Theory or      │
│   Compares Pattern with Other Theories   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                     ⇑
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Researcher Looks For Patterns (Theories) │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                     ⇑
      ┌──────────────────────────────┐
      │   Researcher Forms Categories  │
      └──────────────────────────────┘
                     ⇑
        ┌──────────────────────────┐
        │   Researcher Ask Questions  │
        └──────────────────────────┘
                     ⇑
      ┌──────────────────────────────┐
      │  Researcher Gathers Information │
      └──────────────────────────────┘
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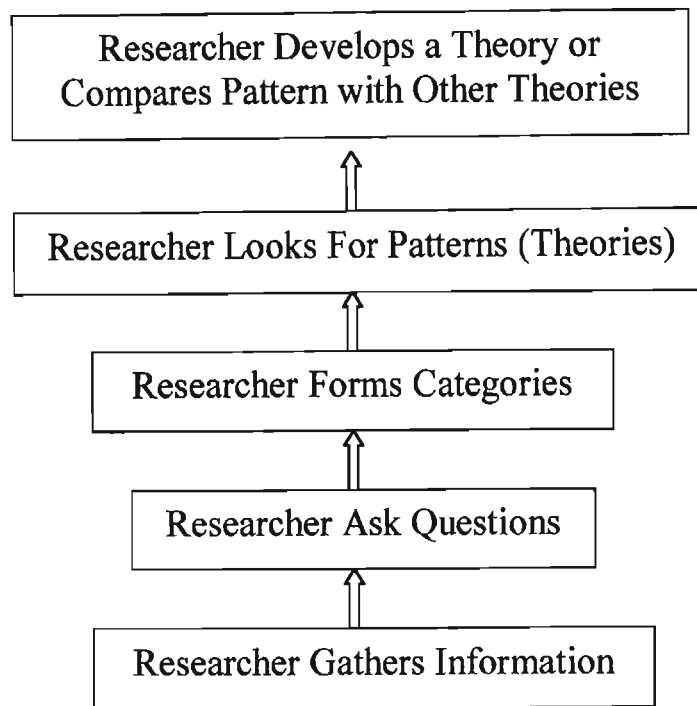
Figure 3.1. The Inductive Mode of Research in a Qualitative Study (from Creswell (1994:96)

According to inductive model, the researcher begins by gathering detailed information and forms categories or themes until a theory or pattern emerges. The inductive process suggests that the theory or pattern be placed late in the study. It may be the end product of the qualitative study. In grounded theory Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested that the development of a theory is the culminating aspect of a study, a theory grounded in the data. This theory might be presented as a logic diagram, a visual representation of relationships among concepts. Whether the end product is a pattern, a generalization, or a visual model, it represents a theory developed by the researcher. Thus writing a theory into a qualitative study is more difficult because there is no standard terminology or rules about placement.

According to Polkinghorne (in Hatch, 1995) most qualitative analytic procedures emphasise a **recursive movement** (own emphasis) between the data and the emerging categorical definitions during the process of producing classifications that will organize the data according to their commonalties. The

analysis builds the categorical definitions by continually testing their power to order the data. The categories are revised and retested until they provide the 'best fit' of a categorical scheme for the data set. However much qualitative analysis is not content simply to identify a set of categories that provide identity to the particular elements of the database. It seeks a second level of analysis that identifies the relationships that hold between and among the established categories. This analysis seeks to show how the categories link to one another. The kind of relationships searched for include, for example causal, correlational, part-whole or subcategorical. The above features are important to understand, because they provide direction for designing all phases of a research study.

This study is founded on the premise that the learners must be allowed to describe their needs from their own perspective, introducing their own categories and themes in their own words, without being bound to respond according to the researcher's view. In the light of the above a primarily qualitative descriptive approach was adopted. Each learner was presented with the following 'questionnaire', to which he/she responded in writing on a blank piece of paper:

a) What is currently offered in career guidance lessons?
b) What do you want to learn about in Career Guidance so that the lessons will be helpful to you? Mention everything whether it is covered or not.

Learners were encouraged to write from their own personal perspective and to look beyond their experience of what the school considers. It must be added that for the particular year that the data was gathered (1997) learners did not receive any formal career guidance. However they did receive guidance in respect of subject selection during their grade nine year.

3.5. ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), researchers in the qualitative mould stress the inevitable and necessary involvement of the researcher in the social world. They argue that in such research complete objectivity is unobtainable and that value-free knowledge does not exist as such. Researchers should express their values openly and honestly so that those who read the outcome of the research can make up their own mind (Gouldner, in Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

Creswell (1995:147) maintains that qualitative research is interpretive research. As such the biases, values and judgment of the researcher become stated explicitly. These should include statements about the past experiences of the researcher that provide familiarity with the topic, the setting, or the informants. These experiences are likely to shape the interpretation of the report.

In this study the researcher has served as a school guidance counsellor for eight years. Her involvement in career guidance has sensitized her to learners expressed need for career guidance programmes. Learners often express interest and concern on issues relating to career education.

The reality is that for a variety of complex reasons, learners' career needs are not being met (Mtolo, 1996; Ntshangase, 1996; Oakley-Smith, 1988).

3.6. CONTEXTS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Hughes and Hitchcock (1995) qualitative methodology enables researchers to learn first hand about the social world they are investigating, by means of involvement and participation in that world through a focus upon what individual actors are saying. The move towards employing qualitative research techniques in school-based research over the past two decades has been instrumental in moving the focus of much educational research back into the classrooms, staffrooms and offices of schools. They maintain that the processes of education, teaching and learning are so complex and multifaceted that to focus only upon cause and effect is limiting.

Applied to educational contexts, qualitative research recognizes that what goes on in our schools and classrooms is made up of complex layers of meanings, interpretations, values and attitudes. Schools, classrooms and their participants have histories and careers, teachers and pupils responses to innovation and institutionalization ensure that schools and classrooms have cultures and an ethos.

A firm understanding of these variables and the ways in which they interact to create the politics and dynamics of educational change requires a qualitative appreciation of these factors. 'That is, qualification of actions, ideas, values and meanings through the eyes of participants rather than quantification through the eyes of an outside observer' (Hughes &Hitchcock, 1995:26). Thus qualitative research is more amenable and accessible to the school-based contexts since it

has considerable advantage of drawing both the researcher and the subjects closer together. It focuses upon investigating social behavior in natural settings and requires close attention be paid to what ordinarily and routinely happens in schools and classrooms.

Walsh (1996) maintains that qualitative methods provide a means for understanding the richness and subtlety of human experience. Rather than forcing a phenomenon into pre-established classes or reducing it to numbers, qualitative researchers explore experience in its unconstrained complexity. The qualitative researcher invites participants to describe events through their own words and in their own way. The researcher's task is then to distil the common themes or structures revealed through participants' narratives. This approach sees experience as meaning-laden, and as more than the sum of its parts. This attitude entails abandoning the myth of objective observation, relaxing rigid rules and adopting a participant-explorer approach.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) qualitative researchers attempt to capture the individual's point of view. In this study the researcher attempts to gain insight of learner needs and perceptions of career guidance. The validity of considering what learners themselves feel they need to learn through career guidance programmes can only add to the meaning and relevance of such programmes. In this way learners can be equipped to successfully negotiate the challenges associated with adolescence.

3.7. CRITIQUE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Carr and Kennis (1986), the interpretive approach is unable to produce wide-ranging generalizations, or provide 'objective' standards for verifying or refuting theoretical accounts. Furthermore they maintain that the interpretive model neglects questions about origins, causes and results of actors adopting certain interpretations of their actions and social life, and neglects the crucial problems of social conflict and social change. This leads them to conclude that the interpretive view of the relationship of theory to practice is flawed. This is because of the way in which social reality is constructed out of a plurality of 'subjective meanings'.

In addition the interpretive approach neglects questions about the relationships between individual's interpretations and actions and external factors and circumstances. They suggest that whilst social reality is constructed and

maintained through the interactions of individuals, the range of possible interpretations of reality that are open to individuals is constrained by the particular society in which they live.

Hence it is appropriate for social science to examine not only the meanings of particular forms of social action, but also the social factors that engender and sustain them.

3.8.   GROUNDED THEORY

In qualitative research, Creswell (1994) maintains that the logic of design (the methodology) will be inductive, developing a story or patterns from detailed categories or themes. This logic also suggests an emerging design, not a static design, wherein the categories develop during the study, rather than are predetermined before the study begins. A grounded theory perspective from Glaser (1978:31) supports an inductive approach:

> In our approach we collect the data in the field first. Then start
> analyzing it and generating theory. When the theory seems sufficiently
> grounded and developed, then we review the literature in the field and
> relate the theory to it through the integration. (Glaser 1978:31).

In this perspective the qualitative researcher does not foreclose the debate by operating within tight strictures of past studies or literature. The methodological thrust of the grounded theory approach to qualitative data is toward the development of theory, without any particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research or theoretical interests. Thus it is not really a specific method or technique. Rather it is a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, and certain methodological guidelines such as the making of constant comparisons and the use of a coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density (Strauss, 1987:5).

According to Strauss & Corbin (1990: 23), a grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents, That is, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other.

One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.

Strauss & Corbin (1990) further maintain that in grounded theory the researcher attempts to derive a theory by using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information. Two primary characteristics of this design are the constant comparison of data with emerging categories, and theoretical sampling of different groups to maximise the similarities and differences of information. In Denzin and Lincoln (1995:508) the above authors urge that these criteria be followed so that readers can 'judge the validity of the theory.'

3.8.1. The Rationale for Grounded Theory

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) the need for grounded theory approach were:

♦ the need to get out into the field, if one wants to understand what is going on;
♦ the importance of theory, grounded in reality, to the development of a discipline;
♦ the nature of experience and undergoing as continually evolving;
♦ the active role of persons in shaping the worlds they live in;
♦ an emphasis on change and process, and the variability and complexity of life;
♦ the interrelationships among conditions, meanings and action.

In doing qualitative analysis, Glaser, in particular, (1965, 1968) saw the need for a well thought out, explicitly formulated, and systematic set of procedures for both coding and testing hypotheses generated during the research process.

3.8.2. Some Theoretical Constructs In Grounded Theory

According to Strauss & Corbin (1990) theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which is not.

This is done in conceptual rather than concrete terms. It is theoretical sensitivity that allows the researcher to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually

dense and well integrated.

Theoretical sensitivity comes from a number of sources. One source is **literature,** which includes readings on theory, research and documents of various kinds. By having some familiarity with these publications, you have a rich background of information that "sensitizes" you to what is going on with the phenomenon you are study.

Professional experience is another source of sensitivity, if a researcher is fortunate enough to have had this experience. Throughout years of experience in a field, one acquires an understanding of how things work, in that field, and why, and what will happen under certain conditions. This knowledge even if implicit, is taken into the research situation and helps the researcher to understand events and actions seen and heard, and to do so more quickly than if you did not bring this background into the research.

Personal experience represents still another source of theoretical sensitivity. By drawing upon the personal experience the researcher can have a basis for making comparisons that in turn stimulate the generation of potentially relevant concepts and their relationships. However one must be careful not to assume that everyone else's experience has been similar to yours.

In addition, the **analytic process** itself provides an additional source for theoretical sensitivity. Insight and understanding about a phenomenon increase as you interact with the data. Often, one idea or insight sparks another, directing you to look more closely at the data, to give meaning to words that seemed previously not to have meaning, and to look for situations that might explain what is happening here. This increasing sensitivity to concepts, their meanings and relationships is why it is so important to interweave data selection with data analysis. Each feeds into the other thereby increasing insight and recognition of the parameters of the evolving theory.

3.8.3. Process In Grounded Theory
Definition of Terms

In this study the following are key concepts:

Data collection - the finding and gathering of materials that the researcher will then analyse
Category: A classification of concepts when concepts are compared one against

another and appear to pertain to a similar phenomenon. Thus the concepts are grouped together under a higher order, more abstract concept called a category.
Coding: The process of analysing data.
Open Coding: The process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data.

Open coding is the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenemena through close examination of data. Without this first basic step, the rest of analysis that follows could not take place. During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data. Through this process, one's own and others assumptions about phenomena are questioned or explored leading to new discoveries.

There are several different ways of approaching the process of open coding.

For the purposes of the study the researcher chose a **line-by-line analysis**.
This involves close examination, phrase by phrase, and even sometimes of single words. This is perhaps the most detailed type of analysis, but also the most generative. Generating categories early through line-by-line analysis is important because categories also become the basis of theoretical sampling.

In respect of open coding, Strauss (1987: 31) reinforces the need to *analyse the data minutely*. He maintains that this effort is entirely necessary "for achieving and extensive theoretical coverage which is also thoroughly grounded."

Furthermore Strauss (1987:31) recommends the more-microscopic approach to open coding 'minimizes the overlooking of important categories, leads to a conceptually dense theory, gives the feeling - to the reader as well as the analyst- that probably nothing of great importance has been left out' of the theory. Consequently this forces both verification and qualification of the theory. However it should be noted that when a code seems relatively saturated - 'nothing new is happening' - then the analyst will find himself or herself moving quickly through the data, finding repetitions in the line-by-line examination, and so will scan pages until something new catches the eye. Then the minute examinations begin again. Thus process in grounded theory is both systematic and interrelated.

3.8.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Strauss & Corbin (1990) maintain that two analytic procedures are basic to the coding process. The first pertains to the **making of comparisons,** the other to the **asking of questions.** These two procedures help to give the concepts in grounded theory their precision and specificity.

3.8.4.1. Labeling Phenomena

Since concepts are the basic units of analysis in the grounded theory method, conceptualizing data becomes the first step in the analysis. By breaking down this means taking apart an observation, a sentence, a paragraph and giving each discrete incident, idea or event, a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon. Then questions are asked about each one, like: What is this? What does it represent? The researcher compares incident with incident as s/he goes along so that similar phenomena can be given the same name (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:63)

3.8.4.2. Discovering Categories

Strauss & Corbin (1990) maintain once particular phenomena in data have been identified, the analyst can begin to group concepts around them. This is done to reduce the number of units with which we have to work. The process of grouping concepts that seem to pertain to the same phenomena is called **categorizing.** At this point any proposed relationships are still considered provisional. The phenomenon represented by a category is given a conceptual name, however this name should be more abstract than that given to the concepts grouped under it. Categories have conceptual power because they are able to pull together around them other groups of concepts.

In approaching the categorization process, the authors suggest that the analyst step back and look at the entire observation with many concepts in mind and say: What does this seem to be about? (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:66). In doing a real grounded theory study, the researcher aims more than just a listing of concepts or even grouping of them. Categories have to be analytically developed by the researcher.

3.8.4.3. Naming a Category

The name chosen by the researcher is usually the one that seems most logically

related to the data it represents, and should be graphic enough to remind you quickly of its referent. However it must be a more abstract concept than the one it denotes. The most important thing is to name a category, so that the analyst can remember it, think about and most of all begin to develop it analytically (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Finally Denzin (1994:508) maintains that 'The grounded theory perspective is the most widely used qualitative interpretive framework in the social sciences today. Its appeals are broad, for it provides a set of clearly defined steps any researcher can follow.'

3.9. UNDERTAKING THE RESEARCH

The researcher decided to conduct the research at the school in which she has taught. The researcher gained entry into the institution with little difficulty as she was familiar with the personnel, protocol and hierarchy involved in school organisation. The principal was approached for permission to conduct the research. The purpose of the research study was discussed with the principal. A copy of the research questionnaire was submitted to the principal for his attention.

An appointment date and times were discussed, in consultation with the subject teachers involved, to administer the research questionnaires. The learners' classrooms were chosen as the 'natural' site for the study. It was decided to administer the questionnaires in the comfort of their own classrooms, rather than having them all together in the school hall. It is hoped that this would have serve a two-fold purpose; firstly learners would be in a familiar environment thereby facilitating their responses; secondly the smaller class units would help facilitate the interaction between researcher and subjects. The questionnaire was administered in three consecutive sessions over one morning. The duration of each session was approximately 40 minutes.

In order to obtain a true insight of subjects' career needs and perceptions, they were requested to remain anonymous. According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), the importance of anonymity is an essential ingredient of qualitative research. It safeguards the rights and confidence of the subjects, particularly in the case of school-based research. As the world of schools and classrooms are full of values and perceived conflicts of interest and the researcher may have more 'power', authority and status than the subjects, or the researcher may hold

very different values to the subjects. Thus confidentiality and anonymity are essential aspects of the presentation and must be acknowledged accordingly.

3.9.1. Data Collection

Creswell (1995) maintains that data collection procedures in qualitative research involve four basic types: observations, interviews, documents, and visual images. In this study it was decided to use documents since it is theoretically congruent with grounded theory. At the outset learners were informed that participation in the research was on a voluntary basis and that they were free to decline. All the learners volunteered to participate in the research study. Learners were specifically requested to write down in the form of an essay (a) what is currently offered in career guidance lessons; (b) what topics they would like to cover during career guidance lessons.

Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) maintain that one of the principal tasks of qualitative data analysis is organising and making sense of data. For purposes of retrieval and subsequent analysis a document will need to be readily available for consideration. Creswell (1995) recommends that documents enables the researcher to obtain the language and words of the informants.

Furthermore documents represents data that are thoughtful in that informants have given attention to compiling. In addition it can be accessed at a time convenient to researcher-an unobtrusive source of information. In terms of its limitations documents may be protected information unavailable to public or private access. Furthermore documents may be incomplete or not authentic or inaccurate (Creswell, 1995).

3.9.2. Sample Group

The subjects were drawn from three classes at a secondary school in the Tongaat area. It is a former House of Delegates school which is coeducational. The racial composition of learners at this school is still largely Indian. One hundred, grade 10 learners were purposefully selected as an appropriate target group, for the younger and less mature of them would express needs similar to those of the lower standards, while the older and more mature would express needs similar to those of the higher standards. Thus focusing on the 'middle' grade should yield data with a fair degree applicability to the junior and senior sections of secondary school (Euvrard, 1996).

The average age was 15 years 7 months. The oldest learner was 16 years 3 months and the youngest was 15 years old. In terms of sex there was an almost equal number of girls and boys. Although all learners were fluent in English they were encouraged to write in whichever language they felt best able to express themselves.

The researcher requested a sample group of a 100 grade 10 learners. The researcher was given the first three classes of the grade 10 learners. It was coincidental that all the learners in the sample group, were attempting the double science course, that is Mathematics and Physical Science.

3.10   CONCLUSION

In the above chapter the researcher attempted to provide the research study with scientific rigour by:

- outlining some of the basic assumptions and suitability of qualitative research paradigm
- providing a conceptual background to grounded theory as a method of analysis to underpin the study
- locating the research question within grounded theory so as to provide the kind of data needed
- emphasising the process of data analysis

In the next chapter the collected data will be analysed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) and Creswell (1995), contend that choice of method, data collection and data analysis are all linked. This is a fundamental aspect of qualitative research. The analysis involves a move from a description of what *is* the case to an explanation of *why* that is the case. For this to happen Creswell (1995) maintains that the researcher be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts. Data analysis also requires that the researcher be open to possibilities and see contrary explanations for the findings.

As stated in chapter three, the grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory. Analysis in grounded theory is composed of three major types of coding. These are: (a) open coding; (b) axial coding; and (c) selective coding. However the lines between each type of coding are artificial (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study the researcher will analyse the data using the procedures of open coding, where concepts are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. The basic analytic procedures by which this is accomplished are: the asking of questions about the data; and the making of comparisons for similarities and differences phenomena. Similar events and incidents are labelled and grouped to form categories. Axial coding puts data back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. Selective coding involves identifying the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development. (Strauss & Corbin 1990: 96 & 116).

Although there are different ways of approaching the process of open coding, the following specific procedures were used: (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:72-73)

♦ a line-by-line analysis of each document. This involved close examination, phrase by phrase, and even sometimes single words. This detailed analysis generated categories early, providing a basis for theoretical sampling.
♦ What is the major idea brought about in this sentence? Give it a name. Then a more detailed analysis on the concept was done. This is particularly useful

when there are several categories already defined and one needs to code around them.

4.2.   THE PROCESS OF DATA REDUCTION

Step 1: Each document was numbered from one to hundred. The basic purpose was to facilitate referencing and the subsequent coding process.

Step 2: Familiarisation
This step consisted of reading each essay as a whole first, in order to familiarise oneself with the data. The basic aim was to get an intuitive and holistic grasp of the data. The reading was done with as open a mind as possible - trying to understand the experience of the person through his or her eyes.

Step 3: Line-by-line analysis
This was done firstly in response to the question, What is currently offered in career guidance lessons? The first step was to conceptualize the data. This process involved close examination, phrase by phrase and even single words. Each incident or idea was given a name or something that represents the particular phenomena. This was done by asking questions: What is this? What does it represent? In this way categories and subcategories began to emerge.

The procedure was repeated for section b. In addition to enable the reader to get a sense of the number of respondents who made comments of a certain category, the number of comments in a particular category was converted to a percentage. It must be noted that the percentages are not additive since many respondents made a variety of comments which were coded into multiple categories.

Please note: in the following analysis specific respondents' comments are noted in italics to illustrate the category of responses.

4.3.   ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO FIRST QUESTION

In response to the first part of the questionnaire which asked:
a) What is currently offered in career guidance lessons?

The following two categories emerged:

4.3.1. Lack of career guidance teaching

All the learners (100%) indicated that no career guidance was done during the course of the year. Many noted that there was no qualified guidance teacher at their school.

◆ *Since the beginning of the year we have not been taught anything in career guidance.*
◆ *We did not have a qualified guidance teacher this year.*

The desire to have career guidance was noted in the responses of four learners; for example,

◆ *I would really like to have these lessons so that I would know what I require to become a successful person in life.*
◆ *I would have liked to have had these lessons for it is essential to me in choosing my career.*

A further two learners expressed regret and concern of not covering any career guidance:

◆ *We unfortunately did not have a guidance teacher and have not even started Career Guidance lessons.*

4.3.2. Anger

In addition to the above there were ten learners who appeared to have responded in an angry manner. This is illustrated in the following examples:

◆ *Do you really want to know? OK, for the past six/seven months I have learnt absolutely nothing about career guidance. It is not my fault that I was not equipped with this subject. To start off, we didn't even have a teacher.*
◆ *This year we have not had any lessons of Guidance.........this is disastrous as it is vital for us to have an idea what we want to do and how to get there. We did not have a period of guidance, leave alone career guidance!*

Some learners were bold and forthright in expressing their anger, for example:

- *I hope we get a teacher that does not do Maths during the guidance period. We should not get teachers who come to our class and during our guidance lesson complete their own work!*

In the above statements a number of features should be noted: the learners quoted seem to indicate some sense of desiring career guidance and feeling that their curriculum was limited through the omission of guidance. A further interpretation indicates learners expressing a lack of agency in terms of being able to access the knowledge they believe Guidance might provide.

4.4. ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO SECOND QUESTION

Section b was phrased:
What do you want to learn about in Career Guidance so that the lessons will be helpful to you?

Mention everything whether it is covered or not.
In this section the following categories and subcategories emerged:

4.4.1. General career information (91%)

A significant number of learners simply requested information on the different careers in general. They seemed to want to know about the variety or range of careers available to them. In addition learners requested to know about the nature of the careers.

- *I would like to learn more about the various occupations. This should assist me in choosing a career suited to me.*
- *We need to know more about the careers in detail because one's choice is something we would have to live with for the rest of our lives.*
- *In Career Guidance I would like to be introduced to all the careers that are available to us. In this way I would be able narrow down my choices for the careers that I would like to pursue.*
- *I would like to learn about the different careers in detail so it would help me choose a career since I am undecided right now.*

The learners quoted reveal an explicit and genuine need for baseline career knowledge. This can be seen in the need to learn about variety of options. In addition learners appear to maintain a belief that career choice once made, is irreversible. Furthermore it is noted that the learners seemed to qualify the need to know more about the careers in detail so that they can gain clarity of future expectations. They astutely recognise the link between broadening knowledge and career decision-making to make better decisions.

Included in this broad request for information is a further category which looks at positives and negatives related to careers.

♦ *We would like to know about the advantages and disadvantages of the different careers.*

This may be indicative of the current stage or level at which the learner is, in terms of career development (to be explored further in chapter 5).

4.4.2. Subjects link with Careers (44%)

A number of learners (44%) expressed a need to learn about the various career options they could pursue in relation to their specific subject choice.

♦ *I am doing an S2 course and still have no idea of what career choice to make so I would like more career occupations to be introduced in career guidance.*
♦ *Even though we are in std 8 many of us are still unsure and confused about career choices. It would be made easier if we were informed of what subjects are needed for the different careers.*

Another learner qualifies the subject-career link by stating that:

♦ *If we choose a career we should know what subjects are appropriate. Students most of the time choose the wrong subjects.*
♦ *I would like to learn more about the different types of career with the course that I have taken so I could make up my mind and choose a career that will suit me.*

These comments develop ideas on the theme of wanting career knowledge to expand existing schemas. This further indicate some concerns regarding having already made subject choices with limited career information, or the possibility

having made problematic subject choices. Certain learners indicated that if they knew which subjects were directly linked to their career choice, they could focus or concentrate on those specific subjects. The above learners seem to have established a link between their subjects and careers, and have made requests accordingly.

4.4.2.1.
Subject Grades and Career Link (9%)

Some learners are aware of the relationship between subject grades and concomitant careers. At the senior secondary phase, learners generally earn the level of the subject grade through marks attained, that is either higher grade or standard grade. This need to obtain clarity was expressed as follows:

♦ *I would like to learn about the requirements needed in the different fields of study so that I know which subject grades can be dropped and which cannot.*

This is a recurring dilemma with senior secondary learners according my observation. It has been observed that learners in grades 11 & 12 tend to drop their grades from higher grade to standard grade. Consequently this has important implications because entry into certain tertiary study options may be linked to the grade in which a subject is undertaken as well as the symbol obtained. Hence learner's admission into specific careers at tertiary level may be limited. This indicates that some of the learners are aware of the need to be thinking ahead to training possibilities.

4.4.3.   Requirements of the careers (74%)

In general many learners appeared to be keen on knowing the requirements of certain careers as they indicated this would help them decide whether that would 'suit my needs'. This is reflected in the following:

♦ *I would like to learn in detail exactly what requirements are necessary for a particular career. What qualifications does one need for the career in mind? People should come and guide the pupils about the different fields.*
♦ *Most importantly we want to learn what the different careers entail so that we can make wise choices.*
♦ *I would like to know what is expected of me in a particular career.*

Some learners also wanted to know about the relevant stresses and challenges of the job:

♦ *I would like to know whether I would undergo a lot of stress when doing this job.*
♦ *I want to know what hardships I will face. I do not want to choose a career and then find that I cannot cope.*

In addition learners requested more specific knowledge/information on the different careers. This is indicated in the following subcategories:

4.4.3.1.
Duration of the study (17%)

Specific career information related to certain options being considered by learners was requested. Learners appeared keen on knowing:

♦ *How many years I would have to study when pursuing the career of my choice.*
♦ *I would also like to know the amount of years that I would need to study at university to become either a Computer Programmer or a Mechanical Engineer.*

The researcher seemed to gain the impression that the learner's need to know about the duration of study was motivated by sense of urgency on the part of learners to enter the job market as soon as possible.

4.4.3.2.
Scope of career (46%)

Learners indicated the need to have knowledge of future career/job trends in terms of demands, job opportunities, and job security. Their concerns were expressed as follows:

♦ *I would like to know what jobs are most needed in South Africa. Some careers are overcrowded and I would like to be notified about it so that I could choose a job that I would be guaranteed a place.*
♦ *Is there a scope for the career I want?*
♦ *I would like to be informed whether there is a demand for people in these*

Careers. For I don't want to pursue a career in teaching and later find out, that there are no job posts for teaching.

♦ *It would be of no use to have a degree and then not find a job. Inform us which fields are overpopulated and which are sparsely populated.*

Certain learners appeared to be aware of the realities of limited job opportunities and competitiveness of the job market. The above concerns also appear to refer to issues of limited places available due to affirmative action.

4.4.3.3.
Salary (26%)

A fair number of learners expressed interest in knowing what the financial rewards of the careers were. This was expressed as follows:

♦ *The salaries earned in the specific line of work is important because of today's cost of living.*
♦ *Approximately how much each of these careers pay so that I know whether the salary suits me.*
♦ *In this day and age money is essential for survival. I believe that if you cannot land a well paying career, you have wasted 12 schooling years of your life.*

It is evident from certain learner's needs and perceptions that financial rewards as a value, is a key factor in career choice. However, in comparison to the previous subcategory, scope of career, almost double the number of respondents seemed more concerned about securing jobs rather than financial rewards.

4.4.4. INTEREST IN TERTIARY/POSTMATRIC STUDIES (92%)

An overwhelming number of learners indicated an interest/need to continue with post matric studies. This may be attributed to their awareness that job market demands more than just a matric qualification, and that the job market is highly competitive. The majority of learners broadly wanted to know more about tertiary requirements, so that they have a wider range of choices, in respect of career choice. These enquiries were evident in the following aspects:

♦ **Symbols/results** - they needed to obtain at matric level to gain admission in particular course at university/college.

- **Application to tertiary institutions** - learners asked to be taught how to go about applying to tertiary institutions.
- **Choice of subjects at tertiary level** - in relation to chosen career. This is at a second level where learners will need to choose subjects. This time directly linked to their respective careers.
- **Differences between universities, technikons and colleges** - learners requested clarity on what each of the above institutions offer.
- **Choice of tertiary institutions** - learners needed to know what courses are offered where. Learners (11%) wanted to know more about the reputation of tertiary institutions in terms of pursuing the studies with minimum disruption. Also "the best university offering medicine."
- **Duration of study at tertiary level** - learners were keen on knowing how many years of study a particular field involved.
- **How do we adapt to tertiary lifestyle** - learners expressed concern of their adaptation to a different learning-teaching environment.
- **Overseas study** (7%) learners expressed desire to study overseas and wanted more information in this regard.

The high percentage of learners interested in tertiary studies may also be linked to the three classes surveyed not being representative of the whole year group (see chapter three).

4.4.5. HOW TO CHOOSE A CAREER (51%)

In general learners appeared to be confused about which careers to follow and how to deal with the career decision-making process. They seem to recognise that they have reached a critical phase in their career development. Hence their explicit request for career guidance to enable them to make informed decisions. The following excerpts succinctly highlight the dilemma of the career decision-making process.

- *I am undecided right now. I'd like to know about Chemical engineering and becoming a an air hostess because I like to deal with chemical and travel from place to place. But I'm still not certain because I thought about other careers that I also enjoy doing like becoming a lawyer, teacher, mechanical engineer or even a physiotherapist.*
- *Many of us have no idea of our career choice, while others have a few in mind but haven't chosen a specific one.*
- *I am confused on how to choose my career because I don't know what*

profession suits me.

The need to make the *right* choice seemed to be paramount to learners.
The consequences of not making the right choice revealed itself in fear of some learners asking:

♦ *What can I do to prevent myself from making a wrong choice?*

♦ *One's choice is something we have to live with for the rest of our lives. The wrong career choice makes matters worse. We are doomed for the rest of our lives. What if I find that I cannot cope with the challenges of the career? Can I change my career?*

There is a strong sense that learners tend to believe that career choices are irreversible. Learners appear to have the idea that career choice is an event or one-off action that once made they have to live with for their rest of their lives.

Furthermore it may be that the need for career guidance to make the right choice is motivated by the learner's fear and or uncertainty of the future.
For example:

♦ *tell us whether our career choices are good or bad, explain to us all the things the career holds for us so that we can be fully prepared for what we may face in the future.*

Certain learners needed reassurance of whether they were heading in a direction which would lead to openings and deal with future career expectations. The need for greater discussion around the concepts of career and ways in which individuals have some "say" in the directions they choose seem to be highlighted.

4.4.6.   OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION REQUESTED

Some learners showed keen interest in meeting with professionals or specialists of specific fields. As well as visiting places of career interest.

4.4.6.1.
Specialists in the field (11%)

Learners were clear and direct in their request to meet with professionals and specialists in the different fields. This is revealed in the following statements:

♦ *It would be very helpful if people in different fields come to school and speak to us about their respective careers so that we have some idea of what the job is really like.*

♦ *I want to speak to someone who is in the same occupation that I want to follow. Ask him/her questions about the job. I would be more knowledgeable and know whether the career suits me or help us identify the right career for us."*

♦ *Lecturers from colleges and universities should visit our schools to discuss more about their specific fields.*

The need to meet professionals and specialists from particular fields may be attributed to learners desire to assess whether he/she can identify with relevant rolemodels. In addition the learner's need for exposure to specialists may be a form of reality testing for them.

4.4.6.2.
Excursions/Exhibitions/Career Workshops/Site Visits (13%)

Some respondents were strong and emphatic in their request for the school to arrange career visits.

♦ *It would be appreciated if the school could take us on career guidance excursions to different tertiary institutions, and different business regions so that we have an idea where our future lies.*

♦ *The most helpful and informative means of learning more about Career Guidance would be excursions to the various universities, colleges and technikons.*

Learners apparently not only wanted career information, they also seemed keen on sourcing this information first hand or by themselves. Again there was a need on the part of the learners for career guidance to move beyond the confines of school and provide a taste of outside realities.

4.4.7. INFORMATION REGARDING PERSONAL TRAITS

Learners requested to be guided according to their personalities, abilities, interests and talents.

Personality (15%)

♦ *I would like to pursue a career according to my personality or likes/dislikes, for example if I like to work with people/children or if I like to work with animals/plants. Basically I would like to know what jobs suit me.*

Abilities (12%)

♦ *I would like to know more about careers that I have potential in becoming a success. I would like to know whether I am capable in the particular field.*

Interests (6%)

♦ *We should be encouraged to pursue a career according to our interests and not discouraged because of past performances.*

Talents (4%)

♦ *I believe every person has a talent and needs more opportunities to know more about careers.*

Learners need to clarify the influence or role of personal traits in career choice may be indicative of their need of self-knowledge. More significantly discovering personal traits may symbolize the need to allay fears of the future.

4.4.8. BURSARIES/SCHOLARSHIPS (27%)

The cost of financing postmatric studies seemed to be an area of concern to learners. Their anxiety surrounding financing postmatric studies may be gauged as follows:

♦ *I'm not sure whether my parents will be able to afford to send me to university. I need to know how to apply for bursaries and student loans.*

♦ *I need to know about bursaries since the careers I like involve many years of studies and a lot of funding. I need to know how I can qualify for a scholarship.*

It was evident that learners needed information on methods of financing tertiary studies. A number of them are sensitized to the high cost levels of such studies. Hence they wanted to know more about the eligibility/criteria, the names and addresses of institutions that offer bursaries, and how to write/apply for such bursaries.

4.4.9. LIFESKILLS (22%)

Learners appeared keen to acquire the necessary skills for the job market. They specifically requested that career guidance lessons should be designed to equip them with the following skills:

- **Compiling a curriculum vitae** - learners wanted to know how to write their CVs requesting to know the format etc
- **Job applications** - learners wanted to know how to apply for a job
- **Interview situations** - learners were keen on knowing how to conduct themselves during an interview situation and how to dress for the occasion. The ability to communicate effectively during interview situation was an area of concern. Role-play of interview situation was suggested.

Money management skills, entrepreneural skills and planning in terms of short-term and long-term goals were also requested.

One learner seemed to be affected by crime as a social factor:

- *We should be taught how to survive in this crime-ridden country.*

Learners seem to adopt a lifeskills approach to career guidance needs. This is gleaned from learners' requests to be appropriately empowered in real life situations, for example, how to apply for a job, how to communicate effectively, and how to present/conduct themselves for/during an interview situation. Once again this may reveal the level of learner's awareness of coping strategies required in day to day challenges.

4.4.10. THE IMPORTANCE/NEED FOR CAREER GUIDANCE LESSONS (36%)

By indicating what they would like to cover during career guidance lessons, learners are albeit indirectly highlighted the importance of career guidance

lessons. Some learners specifically wrote about the importance or need for career guidance. This is evident in the following quotes:

♦ *Being as young and vulnerable as I am my career choice is very unstable and drastically changes. Due to this, I think that career guidance lessons should be informative and helpful.*

♦ *Even though we are in std 8 many of us are still unsure and confused about our career choices. It would be made easier if Career guidance could guide and motivate us in the right direction.*

♦ *By not having career guidance lessons, we now realize how important the lessons really are." "School is our grounding, without career guidance our road to success will not be a pleasant one.*

In addition, some learners identified the need for teacher inputs within the process of career education. They seemed to believe that the guidance teacher has the expert knowledge and can contribute significantly to the career decision-making process. This is sharply contrasted to learners' perceptions of parent input where one learner stated:

♦ *We do not get much from our parents.*

4.4.11.   SPECIAL/UNIQUE REQUESTS

Gender issues, choice of additional subjects in the curriculum and career mobility were raised as special requests for incorporation into the guidance curriculum. For example:

♦ *Will a woman be able to pursue a career that a man normally does eg architecture, building, welding etc?*
♦ *How do I go about choosing a seventh subject? How will it affect my chances at tertiary level?*
♦ *Can I grow in this career? What are promotions prospects in this job?*

Some of the above comments reflect the uniqueness of the individual and as such needs to be noted.

4.4.12. SPECIFIC CAREERS CHOSEN BY LEARNERS (52%) GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION

The distribution of learners' career choices (table on page 62) was obtained from information generated from section b of the questionnaire, that is 'what do you want to learn about in Career Guidance so that the lessons will be helpful to you?' In total 52% of learners indicated interest in certain careers as indicated in the table. All the learners who participated in the research are involved in the double science courses, namely Mathematics and Physical Science. This may explain the comparatively high levels of interest in Medicine and Engineering. On the other hand learner/s who have indicated interest in careers such as Commerce, Arts and Crafts, Air hostess and Law seemed to be inconsistent with their chosen science-oriented field of study.

A graphical representation of learners' interests in the different career fields is illustrated on the following page (60).
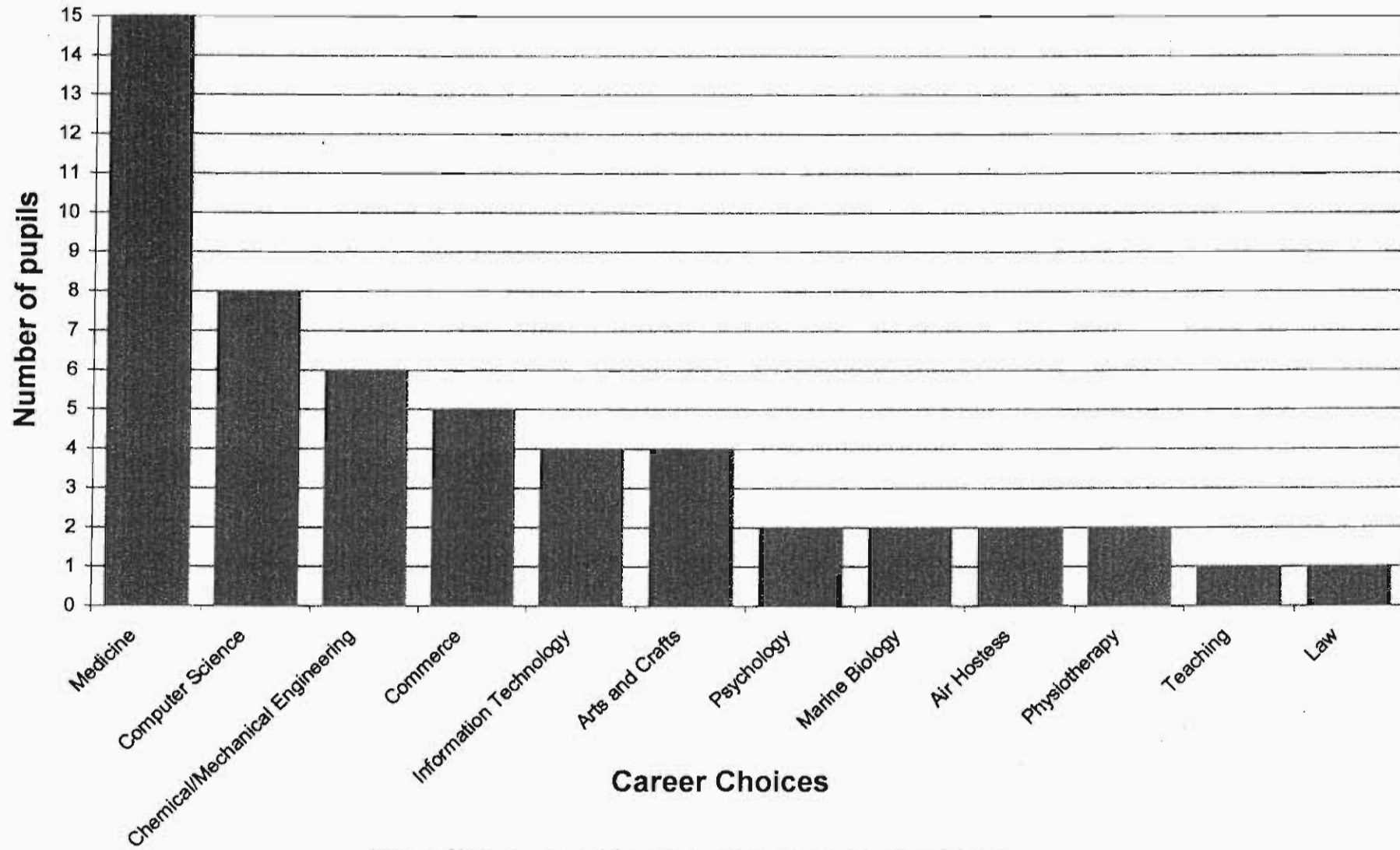
Distribution of learners' career choices

4.5. SUMMARY TABLE OF CATEGORIES

The categories presented do not follow any preferential order rather they appear as emerged in the data:

1. General career information
1.1. Subjects link with Careers
1.2. Subject Grades and Careers

2. Requirements of Careers
2.1. Duration of study
2.2. Scope of study
2.3. Salary

3. Other Sources of Information Required
3.1. Specialists in the Fields
3.2. Career Excursions/Exhibitions/Workshops & Site Visits

4. Interest in Tertiary Studies

5. Choosing a Career

6. Bursaries/Scholarships

7. Lifeskills (related to careers)

8. Importance of Career Guidance

9. Information Regarding Personal Traits

10. Unique Requests

4.6. VALIDITY OF CATEGORISATION

One of the ways of achieving greater internal validity of qualitative data is to obtain an independent other to affirm the findings. The researcher used peer examination which involved enlisting the assistance of a school counsellor. He analysed twenty essays in random order. The following categories emerged from his analysis:

1. Career - definitions
2. Career requirements/matching
3. Finance - busaries, etc
              - salary
4. Decision making - careers
                      - indecision
                      - skills - how to .....
5. University requirements - symbols/marks
                              - different dept. requirements
6. Information: careers, talks, excursions brochures
7. Matching: career vs subject choice
8. Job requirements
9. Choices - How to make? Postmatric choices. Current choices - courses
     to match careers.
10. Curriculum Vitae

The researcher will like to draw attention to the close correlation of findings in terms of common themes that have emerged. It is envisaged that such a correlation should lend to the internal consistency and meaningfulness of the research findings.

4.7.   CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine the expressed needs of the learners. In reducing data (or data analysis) the principle is to present an accurate description of what is being studied. According to Creswell (1994:169) thick description is the vehicle for communicating a holistic picture of the informant's experiences and the meanings he attaches to them. This allows readers to vicariously experience the challenges he encounters and provide a lens through which readers can view the subject's world. The researcher has attempted to provide a faithful account of informant's views of their reality, with little interpretation. In the next chapter the researcher will contextualise some of the major categories that have emerged during data analysis. This represents a more theorised description of the results of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:15) maintain that the interpretive practice of making sense of one's findings is both artful and political. They stress the situated, relational, and textual structures of the experience. There is no single interpretive truth. The constructivist paradigm assumes there are multiple realities.

The salient categories which have emerged in chapter four, provide a basis/framework for theoretical conceptualisation. From a grounded theory perspective this means that the researcher is interested in patterns of action and interaction between various types of social units (i.e. "actors"). The concern is with discovering process, not necessarily in the sense of stages but of reciprocal changes in patterns of action/interaction either internal or external to the process (Strauss & Corbin in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:278). Such patterns of action/interaction will be discussed accordingly.

5.1. LEARNERS IN STAGE OF EXPLORATION

In terms of Super's five stages in the development of career maturity in the individual, the grade ten learners involved in this study were firmly part of the Exploration Stage (14-25years). Due to the traditional approach experienced by most learners, they are most familiar with the "transmission mode" of receiving knowledge, with a sense of learning being drawn from outside. This is revealed in the significantly high number of learners who requested for Career Information. These findings are supported by similar studies carried out by Euvrard (1996), Chuenyane (1983), McGregor (1988). Learners wanted to know more about the availability of careers, and finding jobs and careers. In addition learners' strong perception of the importance of career guidance in this study, conforms with similar views expressed in the literature (Mtolo, 1996).

Furthermore the dire need for career information in career development reinforces the views of Akhurst, Jassat & Belgraver (1999), that is career information will be useful when client is engaging in tasks related to both exploration and crystallisation. In addition different types of information will be of value at different stages. It is clear that learners are motivated to become aware of the occupational world so as to make informed decisions related to

their career choices.

Arising from the data analysis, learners make explicit request for career information in the form of visits to tertiary institutions, meeting with specialists/professionals, career workshops, and pamphlets. The explicit need for career information indicates a lack with and knowledge of the working world. This attests to their need to seek career information to make career decisions since decisions are usually products of information. Mtolo (1996) research has shown that school leavers have limited career knowledge.

In his study Chuenyane (1983) recommends one way of alleviating the need for occupational information is to establish career information resource centres. In addition research work of Watson and Stead (1996) showed that a large majority of respondents in a community prioritised the need for a career resource centre. Watts (in Watson and Stead 1993:3) has suggested that the best course for careers guidance in South Africa is to restrict such guidance to the provision of information. According to Balcomb (1995) community based career centres in Ontario were developed in the 1980s. These centres fulfil a variety of important functions and the increased awareness for such a service has never been greater.

Seeking out such career information may serve/have a two fold purpose/implication: The firstly issue relates to the concept of client readiness. Super (in Brown et al: 1990) maintains that "clients will not become involved in career decision making until they have sufficient career maturity and motivation..." In this study learners recognition and request for career information demonstrates that they are engaging in tasks related to both exploration and crystallisation. The quality of career information requested in terms of requirement for tertiary studies; financing postmatric studies etc, is indicative of learners' level of career maturity that is their interest in career related matters. This further indicates learners' adaptation to realism.

Secondly Brown et al (1990) suggests that reality testing may also be a reason to access career information. In other words learners recognise the need for exposure to real life situations perhaps to demystify career concepts and identify with career role models. In short it seemed learners wanted to expand existing schemas.

A further issue relates to the way in which the learners phrased their requests. It was noted that learners expressed the need for career information to be provided for them. They did not seem to have a sense that they could also actively seek

information. This indicates a level of dependency in the learners. This lack of flexibility in terms of learners' career thinking may be attributed to a lack of personal agency amongst learners.

Our education style seems to encourage a culture of passivity and acceptance amongst learners. Akhurst et al (1999) maintain that career information used to be made available for the counsellors' use only and the learner assumed a passive and accepting role. In a way this reinforces the lack of agency amongst learners. Hence this often results in clients not accepting responsibility for his or her career decisions. Learners need to be encouraged and taught the skills to independently seek career information. This will not only develop a sense of self-efficacy amongst learners but self exploration is necessary in the light of limited career counselling services and where counsellors are working with large numbers of learners.

According to the research results, learners specifically asked for the school to arrange for them to be taken on site visits, career workshops etc. Akhurst et al (1998:10) propose that one of the best ways to obtain career information is to get hands-on experience. Visits to tertiary institutions may be invaluable. Such needs are further supported by Mtolo (1996) in her study of first year tertiary students' experiences of school career education reporting that the majority of students found such visits invaluable.

During the exploratory stages of career development, both the individual and society are striving to establish basic trust toward each other. Each is attempting to determine what meaning the other has for him and what meaning he has for the other. The learners' sincere request to the school to initiate, plan and organise such career related visits may be indicative of the trust learners have in the school as an organisation. In particular learners appear to have confidence in the "expert knowledge" of the guidance counsellors. They seem to view the latter as vital helping agent in the career process. Hence the school can seen as the catalytic agent in fusing the unique world of the individual and the unique world of work.

Some learners displayed a finer sense of discrimination of information and requested for help accordingly. The need to assess the links between subjects and careers and subject grades and careers, by some learners may be attributed to them being more career mature than their peers. On the whole the content of learners' career needs and perceptions reveals that have career aspirations and they are to some extent goal-directed. Freeman (1995) and Van der Merwe

(1993) maintain that career maturity is positively related to learners' career aspirations and goal-directedness.

Finally this research confirms that the learners' need for general career information is consistent with the exploratory stage. The learners' readiness to make career decisions is fluid in that it influenced by a multitude of factors.

5.2.   ISSUES AROUND CAREER CHOICE

Magnusson (1992) defines career planning as "Managing one's pathway through life." This implies that there will be many decisions throughout life that will affect one's career directions. From the results, of this study there is a tendency on the part of learners, to narrowly define career planning as *the decision* to determine what occupation one will choose to pursue. Learners appear to have a perception that career choice is an event rather than a process. This "straitjacket" thinking is revealed in learners' comments such as:

♦ *We are doomed for life if we make the wrong choice.*
♦ *Can I change my career if I've made the wrong choice?*

Consequently there is a strong sense/idea that career choice once made, is irreversible. This attitude to career choice contrasts with Ginzberg's (Weinrach 1979) reformulated theory where he maintains that occupational choice is a reversible process as specific factors can cause occupation decisions to change.

This notion of irreversibility of career choice lends itself to learners developing a sense of fear, uncertainty and anxiety associated with career decision making. Learners should be encouraged to change their attitude to view career planning as a positive process. Gelatt (1989) talks about positive uncertainty which helps clients deal with change and ambiguity, accept inconsistencies and utilize the intuitive side of choosing. Being positive and uncertain allows one to be able to act when one is not certain about what one is doing. However, learners will need to be assisted by skilled educators.

The levels of anxiety arising from career planning issues, as noted in this study, may suggest a psychological vulnerability amongst the grade 10 learners. Cherry & Gear (1987) attribute this psychological vulnerability to changes within adolescence and feelings of insecurity about entering the adult world. Therefore the learners' career needs and perceptions need to be addressed in a responsible

manner so as to alleviate such anxiety levels.

In terms of the trait and factor approach learners have expressed some need for self-knowledge. This included traits such as personality/values, abilities, interests and talents. However the interest in and request for knowledge of factors external to the process of career choice far exceeded the expressed need for intrapersonal knowledge. In other words learners seemed to give more importance to factors in the job rather than personal traits. Learners' career needs and perceptions appear to more life-skill oriented. This is evidenced in their request for information related to requirements of careers (duration, scope and salary). Cherry & Gear (1987) maintain that young people do feel the need for help and guidance from the outside world.

In addition learners expressed needs for the Lifeskills category which included job search skills, ability to compile CVs, how to conduct and communicate effectively in an interview situation. Clearly learners are asking for the necessary tools to deal with such realities. Their awareness of competitiveness and realities of job market such as affirmative action policies etc, seems to support the need for a more skills based career guidance programme. This approach is supported by Watts (1988) who suggested self management skills and job search skills as aims of career guidance. These findings are consistent with the lifeskills approach to school guidance developed by Hopson and Scally (1989). The underpinning philosophy was that traditional forms of education are inadequate to prepare young people for a rapidly changing world. People should be taught skills which lead to self-empowerment. Thus a lifeskills approach to career guidance is necessary in the face of increasing unemployment and limited job creation.

The importance of a lifeskills orientation, in career planning, is aptly highlighted in the following Upstream Philosophy. (Balcombe, 1995:19):

> Three people were having a picnic beside a river........
> One looked up to see a child floating down the river.
> Immediately he leaped in brought the child ashore. As
> he did so, his companions saw two more children helplessly
> bobbing in the water......... Very quickly, they realised the
> river was alive with struggling children in need of rescue.
> As they frantically worked to save as many children as possible,
> one of the three suddenly left the water and began to run upstream
> along the bank. Seeing this, the others shouted after him in alarm:

"Where are you going? Come back, we must help these children!"
Continuing to run, he yelled, "You do your best you can there. I'm
going up the river to try to stop them from falling in."

The above fable highlights the need for skills development and promotes the concept of proactive career guidance programmes. Forney (in Balcombe, 1995:20) maintains that, 'Timing can be almost everything; and we need to help our students avoid falling into and academic or career-development abyss.'

The results of this study concur with Naicker's (1994) views, in particular he maintains that in making career decisions, the role of social influences and cultural environment should be considered. In redressing the imbalances of the past paradigmatic shifts are necessary to cater for disadvantaged learners. Acknowledging and responding to socio-economic and technological trends will enhance autonomy and encourage problem-solving skills amongst learners.

The findings of this research study seem to lend support to what Stead & Watson (1998, in press) stated earlier. The developmental theory of Super's developmental stages, and career maturity and decision making strategies needs to be redefined and re-examined to become more meaningful in the South African context. The little interest expressed in gaining more self-knowledge (abilities, personal suitability, interests) compared to the overwhelming need for information relating to the breadth of careers themselves, qualifies the need as suggested by Stead & Watson for the developmental-contextual approach of Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg (cited in Stead & Watson, 1996). This would allow for different meaning constructs unique to the context of South African learners, to be established.

The results of the research are consistent with Kotze's (1995) view that the contextual approach emphasises a process of construction of meaning. The assumption is that there are different realities and different meanings could be attached to the same event. In comparison the traditional approach is supported by the assumption that there is only one reality. Thus a contextual approach to career guidance promotes the principles of participation and empowerment.

Learners appeared to be sensitive to the exorbitant costs of tertiary education. This was reflected in their the need for knowledge relating to funding of postmatric studies. There may be unrealistic expectations of attaining bursaries and scholarships as there are generally too many applicants for too few bursaries. Learners need to be informed about the differences between loans,

bursaries and scholarships and the criteria used in awarding such finances.

The great majority of learners who are seeking admission into tertiary institutions may reflect unrealistic expectations amongst learners. Mojalefa (in Watson and Stead, 1993) emphasises the lack of information as a critical factor in the discrepancy between the occupational preferences of black adolescents and the realities and needs of the economy. The secondary school education system reveals strong emphasis on the academic curriculum and encourages university/college bound learners. This is inconsistent with the needs of economy It is encouraging to note the high levels of interest in the science and technology fields amongst learners in this sample group. Webb (1990) advocates that the South African economy requires trained people in science and technology.

Van der Merwe in his study (1993) found that exposure to careers guidance promoted career maturity. Stead and Watson (1998) maintain that career maturity is a developmental construct that can be enhanced through structured program intervention. According to the learners' reponses, subject teachers seem to display little awareness or sensitivity of career guidance needs. The current trend in the USA and UK is to promote a whole schools approach to careers education. This approach will ensure that all learners will acquire the relevant skills associated with career decision making. In the South African context, given the lack of qualified career guidance counsellors, limited resources and the reality of working with large numbers of learners needing career guidance services.

It therefore becomes incumbent upon every teacher to promote careers within the school context. This would involve retraining (in-service) of school personnel.

5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study will be discussed in terms of the sample itself, and the actual measuring instrument.

5.3.1. The Sample

The first major limitation relates to the generalisability of the results. The investigation was undertaken at one school in the area and as such the findings

are not necessarily generalisable to other schools in the region. There are a number of factors that could vary from school to school, which could lead to different perceptions (e.g. the target school has a guidance counsellor who is interested in investigating learners' concerns; other schools may not have such an educator). In addition all the learners in the sample were following a double science course. Hence the sample is to some extent skewed.

The second limitation concerns the limits of language. Learners may have experienced difficulty in expressing themselves within a written modality. It is possible that the learners may have lacked the necessary written language skills to effectively articulate career needs and perceptions. In addition learners' lack of labour-market experiences may be felt to limit the relevance of their own ideas for career programmes.

5.3.2. The Measuring Instrument

Qualitative analysis involves interpretive reading. The researcher's interpretation would be according to her subject life-world perspective. This may be inconsistent with what the learner intended. A follow-up interview with learners would have provided clarity on learner's career needs and perceptions.

The research design is to some extent prescriptive and may have lead to the learners' bias to consider only the school's role in career guidance needs and perceptions. The role of the home, peers, teachers and wider socio-economic factors contributes to a more contextually sensitive perspective of learners' careers needs and perceptions. Consequently this may have limited the information gathered.

The research design which involved the analysis of written language may have concealed the important aspects of lived experience.
For example non verbal material are valuable to a researcher involved in qualitative research.

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has led to the following recommendations being proposed:

1. Career counsellors/psychologists need to emphasise divergent thinking to help learners to expand their choices and research other options. Learners need to

be taught the process of exploring values, beliefs and interests combined with how to research the labour market. In addition teaching learners goal setting is a fundamental value of career planning and has a positive impact on learner accountability.

2. Providing access to and provision of career information commensurate with learners' career maturity. Job shadowing concept should be promoted / work experience built into the senior secondary curriculum. This is implemented by some secondary schools.

3. Acquiring career information is part of decision making process but career counsellors must realise that the client's attitude about these facts and how they are arranged and rearranged in the client's mind to formulate a choice. According to Gelatt, (1989) learners need to adopt a positive attitude to career uncertainty. The spinoffs from this attitude is to promote calculated risk taking necessary in the world of work and improve self efficacy amongst learners to access career information. In this way informed career decisions can be made.

4. Shift in orientation from the traditional, trait-focused position to a more developmentally- contextual sensitive view. This requires careful consideration of the interactional nature of both the individual and the context in respect of career decision making.

5. Promoting a lifeskills approach empowers learners developing a sense of personal agency to take charge of career decisions in an independent and responsible manner.

6. Equip learners to deal with shrinking job market, dispel notion career for life, deal with spells of unemployment, explore opportunities in the informal sector, and encourage entrepreneural skills.

7. Career guidance programmes should instil in learners the thinking that career decisions are reversible and a number of decisions are made during one's career path. Learners should not be pressured to make immediate decisions but rather to teach them the process that leads to informed decisions, exploring choices and researching options. The career decision making process is a dynamic one.

8. Motivate subject teachers to become familiar with the career development

process. Encourage them to infuse career education into everyday lessons, special projects, sport activities and field trips.

9. The results of this study should be made available to the school for them to decide how possibly learners' career needs can be accommodated within the school curriculum.

This chapter has considered the results in the light of previous studies and literature. It is suggested that career guidance programmes should be consistent with the career needs and perception of those it is designed to serve. The concluding chapter will attempt to integrate the results of this study with the underlying theory.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Exploring learners career needs and perceptions is one component of career education, albeit a vital area. Establishing the *what* (content) of career programmes is one thing; another relates to *how* such programmes can be implemented. A learner-centred approach to career education which emphasises decision-making skills and problem-solving skills training have been identified by learners and will facilitate the process of career planning. To some extent such skills gained will equip them to deal with concomitant career issues at critical stages of their career development and career transitions, in a responsible and independent manner. Consequently this may promote a sense of agency within learners to seek out necessary career information. Further spinoffs in acquisition of such skills may be realised in a multitude of daily living situations. According to Euvrard (1996:125) 'the goal of many career guidance teachers and counsellors is not to give learners answers but rather to help them ask the right questions.'

As discussed, the value of needs assessment for the planning of any programme is vital. Of particular significance is the relevance and effectiveness of such programmes to the persons that they are designed to serve. Examining common themes and career trends that may have emerged in other studies may provide a valid hypothesis for designing career programmes unique to the South African learner. This study attempted to assess the expressed career needs and perceptions of learners within a process-oriented approach. This is consistent with the underpinning philosophy of career education which involves the process of planning and managing a person's 'pathway through life.'

According to Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) current career education practice in South Africa still reflects the marked inequalities which characterised apartheid education structures. They maintain that career education has been further curtailed due to monetary constraints in both formal education and former Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) structures. This has impacted on staffing and resource provision. In schools, the so-called 'non-examination' subjects have been the first to be cut back and career education, as part of the school guidance, has virtually disappeared in the majority of schools. At the same time there is a growing number of research which underline the call for more coherent and carefully planned career education programmes. The results of this study support this trend and emphasise the need for educators to be providing a career

programme more relevant to the South African socio-economic context.

In the USA & UK the emerging career models perceive the role of guidance as 'potentially central and pervasive' (Watts, 1995:5). They advocate a trend towards a whole-schools approach to career education. This is far from the reality for South Africa. In Curriculum 2005, career education forms part of one of the eight Learning Areas namely, Life Orientation. The implication is that career education should be integral to every school programme. The reality is that school guidance and career guidance is at its most marginalised. Akhurst & Mhize (1999) suggest that since career education is seen as primarily the realm of schools, educators should become sensitised to the need for career education. The authors suggest that the retraining of educators and development of materials which focuses on skills as appropriate measures to address career education needs. In addition collaborative initiatives (such as collective networking) in individual schools together with local business, NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBO) should be encouraged.

In attempting to design a developmental career education programme, a contextually sensitive approach should be adopted. The learners' home, school (teacher & peers), socio-economic and political trends should be incorporated. In this regard, Stead & Watson (1998) strongly suggest that, given the South African context, career researchers and career psychologists should seriously consider employing an indigenous approach to career education. In addition career guidance programmes need to be subjected to constant evaluation in the light of wider dynamics that will impact on relevance and effectiveness.

It is evident from this study that learners' career needs are not being met. The designing and delivery of career guidance programmes, in the light of a number of real constraints, will continue to be a challenge to all stakeholders. The position of career guidance is by no means secure. Initiatives to encourage career education must continue to be implemented with sensitivity and care. The vision to integrate career education as a whole schools approach, remains a challenge to policymakers and practitioners. This is a process that requires proactive renegotiating, redefining and reframing of career-related issues. In short there is a need to re-order priorities.

It is acknowledged that this process will take time, but it is necessary to embark on career programmes in the interests of both learners and the reconstruction and development of this country.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

BIOGRAPHIC AND SCHOLASTIC DATA

Date of Birth: _____
Home Language: _____
Grade: _____

Parents' or Guardian's Occupation: Father: _____
                                   Mother: _____
                                   Guardian:_____

You are requested to write and essay on the following:
a) What is currently offered in career guidance lessons?
b) What do you want to learn about in Career Guidance so that lessons will be
   helpful to you? Mention everything whether it is covered or not.
   (Adapted from Euvrard, 1996).

Thank you for your participation.