

## **The Internationalization of Career Counselling: Bridging Cultural Processes and Labour Market Demands in India**

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The internationalization of career counselling brings into discussion the career counsellor's role in the interface between deep-rooted cultural processes and labour market demands. This article uses the construct of social-cognitive environments to examine the issues that surround career preparation behaviour among Indian high school students and young adults. Data from a large Indian survey are used to discuss the manner in which social cognitive variables create occupational prestige hierarchies in the mindsets of Indian career choosers and their families which in turn influences their choice of educational pathways. The data are used to demonstrate the difference between low, middle and upper-middle socioeconomic status groups in their preference for occupations that emerge from university-based qualifications versus those that are based on vocational training. The importance of considering social-cognitive environments and occupational preferences for policy formulation and resource allocation to promote vocational training is discussed. The article highlights points that could be of specific relevance for the delivery of careers services that would address needs felt in the Indian and broader Asian context.

The internationalization of career counselling gains particular significance in the contemporary situation, wherein counselling and guidance increasingly occur within multicultural contexts. It is more and more likely today that the counsellor and the counselee come from differing cultural backgrounds, each with their own conceptions of work and career. It is possible that the counsellor's version of counselling belongs to a cultural framework that does not match the manner in which the client's culture had prepared him or her to engage with the world of work. Internationalization requires people to consider issues related to the relevance, suitability, and appropriateness of Western counselling frameworks to non-Western cultures. This article presents information from the Indian context that could have relevance to policymakers as well as career counsellors.

Diversity is a key characteristic of Indian culture as people experience it today. Over a long period of 2,000 years, groups of people from other regions of the world settled in India and brought with them their own traditions, social norms, rituals, and ways of living (Thapar, 1966), creating a complex tapestry of attitudes and mindsets towards work and occupation. It is essential therefore that career development is examined within the multiple realities and paradoxes that compose the Indian situation. More recently, the relevance of career counselling in India has become sharper against the background of reforms that have contributed to India becoming one of the world's fastest-growing economies. A corollary to economic development is a widening of the array of occupational possibilities. The effective deployment of career counselling services could facilitate the optimal utilization of human resources to capitalize on these opportunities such that social and economic progress is sustained in the long term. It is also important to keep in mind the cultural differences between Western and Indian approaches to work. Vocational guidance first emerged in an industrial, mechanized, and individualistic work culture. Although "career" has

become an integral aspect of modern Indian culture, career choice and development progress in India in a manner that is quite different from the West.

Work Orientations and Responses to Career Choices — An Indian Regional Survey (WORCC–IRS) is a study that was designed to collect information about young people’s orientations to work and livelihood and the manner in which they make career/vocational choices. The survey covered 15 different regions of India and was executed in 8 different languages. Given below is a brief introduction to the survey.

## **Key Constructs Underpinning the WORCC–IRS**

### ***Social-cognitive Environments***

As with other human activities, work occurs within a social context — a context characterized by patterns of beliefs and ways of thinking. This influence of the mind on behaviour is particularly significant when entire societies begin to think in a particular manner, internalize belief structures, and demonstrate certain mindsets. The term “social cognition” has been used to describe patterns of thinking that have become habitual across social groups and guide the behaviour of the individuals in that community (Bandura, 1989). Research in India (e.g., Arulmani, 2009), parts of South Asia (Arulmani & Abdulla, 2007) and Africa (Arulmani, 2003) has consistently indicated that social cognitions play a powerful and significant role in orientations to work and career as well. Mindsets engendered by social, cultural, and moral frames of reference along with the experiences of a community create social-cognitive environments that give a particular interpretation to the meaning and purpose of work. Within these environments, positive or negative values could be attributed to occupational clusters.

Career planning in India is not a purely individualistic effort. Beliefs and values held by the community play a significant role in the career

decision-making process. Career choice is influenced by the attitudes of the young person's family and community. From this point of view, career development is not merely a function of maturation, the unfolding of personal potentials or the crystallization of personal identities. Personal attributes unfold within a certain social-cognitive environment. The characteristics of this environment could influence the manner in which personal attributes are linked to career development. Social cognitions and social-cognitive environments were taken as core themes for examination by the WORCC–IRS.

### ***A Respectable Career: The Influence of Prestige Attributions on Career Preparation***

Earlier research indicated that career preferences in India tend to be restricted by beliefs about the social acceptability of a career. As a result, certain careers are perceived as “good” careers while others are written off as “lower level” careers (Arulmani, van Laar, & Easton, 2001). Research in North America has shown that Asian Americans are relatively more restricted in their approach to career choice than their non-Asian counterparts, tending to pursue only a limited range of occupations (e.g., Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). Studies in the United Kingdom (e.g., Lightbody, Nicholson, Siann, & Walsh, 1997) also found beliefs about the respectability of a career to have a stronger influence on Asian career choosers than on those of British origin. A striking example of these mindsets is the report of an attempt to examine the cross-cultural validity of Holland's theory (Leong, Austin, Sekaran, & Komarraju, 1998). These researchers found that the Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) could not be directly adapted to the Indian context. This was mainly because many of the participants in the study would not complete the VPI as it was presented, since it included occupations that would be perceived as too low in their prestige attributes to even be considered.

These indications in the literature provide clues to the influence of social cognitive variables on the career development process in the Indian context.

### ***Approach to the Data***

The WORCC–IRS information presented in this article examines two specific themes related to the influence of prestige attributions upon career preparation behaviour. The first is with reference to occupational prestige. Children begin to recognize prestige-linked differences among jobs and thereby learn to include or eliminate occupational alternatives. This section of the WORCC–IRS data throws light on the respectability attributed to an occupation and its subsequent impact on career preparation. The second theme is with reference to subject choice preferences. The gateway to a career is largely controlled by the educational system that offers training opportunities through which the individual can qualify for a career. Two career preparation pathways emerge within the Indian educational system after high school. One of these pathways is based on a system of degrees obtained through college/university education through specializations in subject groups comprising the sciences, humanities, or commerce (business studies) groups. The other pathway is based on diplomas and certificates awarded through polytechnics and industrial training institutes, which are a part of a system of vocational training. WORCC–IRS examined orientations to career preparation by analysing participants' attitudes towards these two systems of study.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in an attempt to collect data as comprehensively as possible. Reviews of the Indian literature indicated that many of the questions that WORCC–IRS was attempting to answer might not have been addressed before in the Indian context. Therefore, the study relied on scales, questionnaires, and inventories developed by the author.

Descriptive analyses, including frequency and percentage analysis, were used to understand the data from the Career and Occupational Prestige Scale (Arulmani, 2000), the Subject Choice Orientation Scale (Arulmani, 2004), and the Career and Occupation Awareness Indicator (Arulmani, 2001). Details about these scales are provided in the sections below. Narratives and focus group discussions were another aspect of this survey and open-ended questions were used to glean qualitative information about the influence of prestige on participants' career preparation behaviour. Qualitative data emerging from these discussions was examined using a modified analytic inductive approach (McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2003).

### ***The Sample***

Some of the most far-reaching decisions pertaining to career preparation in India are made between the end of high school (Grade 10) and the end of the higher secondary years (Grade 12) (Arulmani, 1991). It is well known that socioeconomic status (SES) has a defining impact on career development (e.g., Arulmani, van Laar, & Easton, 2003; Diemer & Ali, 2009; Fouad & Brown, 2000). A stratified random sampling procedure was used to survey a selection of educational settings and three SES groups. Hence the sample comprised boys and girls who were in Grade 10, Grade 12, and vocational training courses, as well as a small number of those who had not completed high school. The study covered the low, middle, and upper-middle SES groups. It is highlighted here that the definition of SES was not limited only to income levels. Drawing from the ideas of Indian social scientists (e.g., Kapoor & Singh, 1998; Kuppaswamy, 1959; Nag, 2006; Srivastava, 1991), WORCC-IRS collected SES data along multiple dimensions, which included parents' education, parents' occupation, material possessions, family income, type of housing, access to electricity and water connection, and reading material available in the home. The final sample

of the survey comprised 6,530 individuals from a total of 88 schools and vocational training institutes. Table 1 presents the details of the sample.

**Table 1. WORCC–IRS Sample Characteristics (N = 6,530)**

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
<b>Age in years (M = 16.40, SD = 1.71)</b>		
13 to 15	2,390	36.60
16 to 18	3,395	51.99
19 and over	745	11.41
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	3,709	56.80
Female	2,821	43.20
<b>Class</b>		
Grade 10	3,072	47.04
Grade 12	2,094	32.07
Vocational	1,253	19.19
High school incomplete	111	1.70
<b>SES</b>		
Low	2,159	33.06
Middle	1,841	28.19
Upper-middle	2,530	38.74

## Key Findings

### *Occupational Prestige Hierarchy*

The Career and Occupational Prestige Scale (Arulmani, 2000) was used to examine the prestige that participants attributed to different occupations. The scale comprises a list of 28 occupations. Participants are required to indicate their choices on a 5-point scale, where 1 indicates the lowest value and 5 indicates the highest value. The scale taps responses along the variables of prestige attribution, interest, self-efficacy, and perception of parental approval. Table 2 presents the 28 occupations in descending order of mean prestige rankings with

**Table 2. Prestige Hierarchy of Occupations With Mean Ratings of Prestige, Interest, Self-efficacy, and Parental Approval of the Entire Sample (N = 6,530)**

Career	Prestige rank	Prestige rating *	Interest	Self-efficacy	Parental approval
Engineer	1	3.67	3.53	3.41	3.73
Scientist	2	3.66	3.27	3.14	3.59
Computer scientist	3	3.66	3.50	3.36	3.65
Medical doctor	4	3.57	3.16	3.07	3.57
Teacher	5	3.31	2.90	3.00	3.29
Lawyer	6	3.16	2.47	2.53	3.09
Police inspector	7	3.14	2.90	2.88	3.01
Biotechnologist	8	3.04	2.74	2.67	3.04
Financial manager	9	3.02	2.73	2.72	3.01
Chartered accountant	10	3.00	2.61	2.63	2.98
Architect	11	2.93	2.70	2.68	2.90
Social worker	12	2.92	2.77	2.76	2.80
Journalist	13	2.89	2.44	2.51	2.77
Agricultural scientist	14	2.82	2.52	2.51	2.75
Psychologist	15	2.81	2.54	2.54	2.74
Economist	16	2.74	2.35	2.41	2.69
Ayurved #	17	2.73	2.42	2.42	2.68
Hotel manager	18	2.73	2.58	2.59	2.66
Public relations officer	19	2.61	2.33	2.37	2.53
Office secretary	20	2.59	2.28	2.39	2.63
Accounts clerk	21	2.52	2.19	2.31	2.55
Librarian	22	2.36	2.03	2.19	2.41
Artisan	23	2.30	2.10	2.17	2.23
Chef	24	2.29	2.03	2.09	2.20
Cook	25	2.20	2.04	2.19	2.20
Farmer	26	2.15	1.88	2.01	2.06
Shopkeeper	27	2.13	1.88	2.02	2.08
Carpenter	28	1.92	1.64	1.78	1.89

\* 1 = very low prestige, 2 = somewhat low prestige, 3 = average prestige, 4 = high prestige, 5 = very high prestige.

# Medical doctor trained in Ayurveda, the traditional Indian medical science.

corresponding mean ratings given to interest, self-efficacy, and parent approval.

The mean prestige ratings across the entire sample irrespective of SES group membership shows that white-collar occupations attract the highest level of prestige. As expected for an Indian sample, doctor and engineer are at the top of the list. Occupations receiving the lowest prestige ratings are those belonging to the blue-collar and vocational category.

The information presented in Table 2 also reveals close linkages between interest, self-efficacy, and parental approval ratings. The trends broadly show that as ratings of occupational prestige decreased, there was a corresponding drop in interest, self-efficacy, and parental approval ratings. A correlational analysis of the ratings of the 28 occupations across the four variables of prestige, interest, self-efficacy, and parental approval was conducted. All inter-correlations were found to be positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level of significance. The range of these correlations was from 0.5 to 0.9.

The data further indicate that irrespective of participants' SES, the attribution of prestige to occupations is fairly consistent. Prestige attributions for a large number of occupations were similar across the low, middle, and upper-middle SES groups. Table 3 presents the prestige attributed by the three SES groups to occupations at the top and bottom ends of the prestige hierarchy. In four out of five instances, the same occupations have attracted the highest prestige attributions from all three SES groups. Similarly, occupations accorded the lowest prestige levels are the same in four out of five instances.

A more nuanced picture was formed from a thematic analysis of narratives and focus group discussions. The key findings that emerged

**Table 3. Prestige Attributions by the Three SES Groups to Occupations at the Highest and Lowest Ends of the Occupational Hierarchy**

	Occupations at the highest end		Occupations at the lowest end	
	Occupation	Prestige rank	Occupation	Prestige rank
Low SES	Computer scientist	1	Farmer	24
	Engineer	2	Chef	25
	Scientist	3	Shopkeeper	26
	Teacher	4	Cook	27
	Medical doctor	5	Carpenter	28
Middle SES	Engineer	1	Chef	24
	Computer scientist	2	Cook	25
	Scientist	3	Farmer	26
	Medical doctor	4	Shopkeeper	27
	Teacher	5	Carpenter	28
Upper-middle SES	Scientist	1	Artisan	24
	Engineer	2	Cook	25
	Medical doctor	3	Shopkeeper	26
	Computer scientist	4	Farmer	27
	Biotechnologist	5	Carpenter	28

Note: This hierarchy is based on the set of 28 occupations presented in Table 2.

from this analysis were that when questions of dignity and social status were raised, almost all participants from the middle and upper-middle SES groups unanimously felt that occupations such as farmer and carpenter were of low status and required “no formal training” or “qualifications.” These participants felt that they would not be respected if they opted for “such careers.” Similar sentiments were not as frequent and all-pervasive among the low SES group. Excerpts from the focus group discussions given below illustrate the manner in which prestige perceptions influence attitudes towards occupations:

The career should be hereditary. Carpenter's son should be carpenter.  
(Girl, Grade 10, 15 years, upper-middle SES)

I want to become an astronaut. Such a career will give me a high status in the world society. (Boy, Grade 10, 14 years, upper-middle SES)

People say poor people's children are never clever. So they should do the simple jobs. So there is low status for some jobs. If rich people became carpenters or plumbers, then the status of these jobs will go up.  
(Boy, 2nd year diploma, 18 years, middle SES)

I am studying a technical diploma course. I will get a job soon after I finish [the course]. But it will [have] a lower pay than engineers. It also puts me lower in the social scale. Technicians are less important than engineers. So I have to start at a lower level. (Boy, 2nd year diploma, 18 years, middle SES)

### ***Orientation to Science-based Courses and Vocational Training***

At the end of High School (Grade 10), the Indian educational system offers the young person four possible subject streams to choose from, namely Science, Commerce, Humanities, and Vocational. The first three lead towards university degrees and the last one leads towards diplomas and certificates. This section examines participants' orientations to courses based on science and vocational training.

The Subject Choice Orientation Scale (Arulmani, 2004) was used to examine participants' interest, self-efficacy, prestige attribution, and parental approval to different subject options. The scale requires participants to indicate their choices on a 5-point scale, where 1 indicates the lowest value and 5 indicates the highest value. A percentage analysis of the participant's ratings on each of the dimensions was conducted for each SES group. Noteworthy trends in the data are discussed below.

Patterns of prestige attributions are dissimilar across the SES groups. Some 71% of the upper-middle SES group rated science as having “high to very high prestige” and 42% of this group rated the vocational option as having “very low or low prestige.” Among the low SES group, both science and vocational courses were valued with similar prestige attributions with a rating of “high to very high prestige” being given by 51% and 49% of the participants for each subject option.

The parental approval variable shows similarly sharp contrasts. The upper-middle SES group perceives low parental approval for vocational courses with as high as 41% rating “low” to “somewhat low support” for this option. Approval for science courses is, however, significantly higher with around 54% rating “very high support” from parents. In contrast, support from parents in the low SES group does not show such acute variations. The data suggest that, if given a choice, families of the low SES group would be grateful if their children could acquire any kind of qualification. In contrast, families of the middle and upper-middle SES group were strongly preoccupied with the prestige attributes that surround further education. Vocationally oriented courses were attributed low levels of prestige, while obtaining a college degree was a “must” for any middle-class young person. It was also observed that a large percentage of the middle-class group linked no specific career goals to going to college other than “I must have a degree.” The impact of prestige was so great that a large number of middle- and upper-middle-class participants in this survey intended to pursue college education, even if this did not lead to direct employment. Excerpts from focus group discussions are given below to illustrate participants’ attributions of prestige to the subject options available to them:

Intelligent students are always science students. After that, they can easily become doctors or engineers. (Boy, Grade 10, 15 years, upper-middle SES)

I am poor. I cannot study for long since I must earn soon. I can only take up vocational studies. But really, I want to study science because then I will have respect. (Boy, Grade 10, 16 years, low SES)

I must get at least a postgraduate degree. Diploma is useless. It has no respect in society. It will mean I am from a poor family. Degree from a university means I have studied a lot. (Girl, Grade 10, 16 years, middle SES)

### ***Attitudes of Young People Pursuing Vocational Courses***

Deeply insightful information emerged through a series of focus group discussions held with a group of young people who were already pursuing vocational courses. Some of them indicated that they initially had misgivings about vocational courses and took this area of study only because they had no other option. But once they entered the course, their opinions about the ways in which the course would help them in their future seems to have changed for the positive. The following excerpts from focus group discussions illustrate the orientations of participants who pursued vocational courses:

I did well in my studies but could not get into any college because of financial problems. My parents put me into this diploma course as a last resort. I was very depressed. But slowly I realized that through this course I can actually find a job easily. It is also a very interesting course. Please tell teachers not to discourage children from taking up polytechnic courses. (Boy, 2nd year Mechanical Engineering diploma, 19 years, low SES)

I joined this diploma course because my family had no other option. I thought I would drop out. But I am still in this course after 2 years! I like it so much now. I am learning electronics. I can get a job. This course will help me become independent. (Girl, 2nd year Electronics Engineering diploma, 18 years, low SES)

### ***Attribution of Prestige and Level of Career Awareness***

The Career and Occupation Awareness Indicator (Arulmani, 2001) was used to assess participants' knowledge about the 28 occupations for which participants' career preferences were assessed. The Indicator requires participants to describe the career briefly and list the qualifications needed to enter the career. The quality of responses is scored from 0 to 3, where 0 indicates "unable to describe the career" and 3 indicates "good description of the career." The consolidated score from the Indicator provides a measure of the participant's level of career awareness.

The mean score of consolidated career awareness obtained by this sample is 13.21 ( $SD = 10.88$ ). Given that the maximum score obtainable is 84, this is an exceptionally low score, indicating a surprisingly inadequate knowledge about the careers on the list. It was expected that high career awareness would be demonstrated for careers which had high preference among participants. To study this hypothesis, the six careers with the highest interest ratings were selected, namely engineer, computer scientist, scientist, medical doctor, teacher, and lawyer. No significant differences were found between the three SES groups in their career awareness scores. The consolidated career awareness score for the entire sample is presented in Table 4.

Attribution of prestige to a career does not seem to be associated with increased knowledge about the career. The data suggest that although participants express high interest in a particular career, their knowledge about that career (e.g., qualifications required, knowledge about what people actually do in these careers, job responsibilities) is extremely low. Computer science is a particular case in point. A career in this field is one of the most sought-after in India and has consistently been rated as most prestigious and most interesting by this sample. Yet,

**Table 4. Mean Scores of Career Awareness Obtained by the Entire Sample (N = 6,530) for Six “High Prestige” Careers**

Occupations in order of prestige ranking	Career awareness score <i>M (SD)</i>
Engineer	0.35 (0.60)
Scientist	0.64 (0.76)
Computer scientist	0.31 (0.60)
Medical doctor	0.84 (0.87)
Teacher	1.09 (0.89)
Lawyer	0.97 (0.83)

Note: Maximum obtainable score = 3. Score of 0–1 = low awareness, 1–2 = some awareness, 2–3 = high awareness.

awareness of what it entails to pursue a career as a computer scientist is markedly low.

## Discussion

### *Occupational Prestige and Subject Choices*

The prestige hierarchy noted within this Indian sample is likely to be present in all cultures. Indeed prestige is a key variable described to influence the process of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1981). The interesting point that emerged in the WORCC–IRS was about the sort of careers that were categorized as having high and low prestige. Occupations that received the lowest prestige ratings were those belonging to the vocational category, whereas careers perceived as “science-oriented” were given the highest ratings.

The influence of occupational prestige on subject choice preferences appears to have a characteristic pattern across SES groups. It seems that it is the upper-middle group that is strongly affected by perceptions of prestige and social status. While participants from the low SES group

place blue-collar professions at a lower level of prestige, their choice of courses and subject options does not seem to be affected by the perceived prestige levels of these occupations. This is indicated by the equally high value that the low SES group places on science and vocational courses.

### ***A Matrix of Interwoven Linkages***

Analysis of occupational prestige revealed the presence of a hierarchy of career preferences, a finding that is consistent across the entire sample. This was an expected finding. Of particular significance are the strong relationships that exist between the other variables examined along with prestige. The data show that interest, self-efficacy, and parental approval increase or decrease according to the prestige rankings of a given occupation. It is against the backdrop of this tightly interwoven fabric of relationships that career orientations seem to be expressed in the Indian context.

### ***Occupationalism***

Other Indian studies (e.g., Desai & Whiteside, 2000; Thomas, 1997) have also found that prestige factors have a strong impact on career decision-making. One consequence is that individuals are judged on the basis of their occupational membership. An engineer may be treated more respectfully than a carpenter regardless of character or competence. Krumboltz (personal communication, April 23, 2004) refers to this “discrimination on the basis of membership in an occupation” as occupationalism. As a result, young people aspiring to win the respect of their peers and parents may choose to enter a particular occupation, not because they would enjoy the work, but because they want to be deemed worthy of respect by virtue of their future occupational membership. Career roles that are supervisory or managerial are accorded more dignity than manual-, skill- and production-oriented roles. This mindset

further extends into the prestige attributed to courses leading to vocationally oriented jobs. It is believed that degree-based training leads to managerial roles whereas diploma courses lead to occupations involving actual production. With large numbers preferring degree courses, a significant lacuna is created in the vocational area.

### **The Relevance of Career Counselling**

The final section of this article uses WORCC–IRS data to delineate the specific points that are of particular relevance to the career counsellor working in the Indian and perhaps the broader Asian context.

Students often approach career planning with biases. “Degree is better than diploma” or “Humanities is not for the intelligent” are examples of career beliefs that reflect such biases. More often than not, it is such mindsets rather than well-thought-out plans that drive career choice. An important target for career counselling would be to address such ideas and beliefs.

Data from this study also point to the possibility that young people are making critical career development commitments, with inadequate knowledge about the world of work. An important target for career counselling therefore would be to sharpen career choosers’ awareness and facilitate informed decision-making.

The impact of prestige in the Indian context is such that a large number of middle- and upper-middle-class students intend to pursue college education, even if this does not lead to direct employment. As discussed earlier, findings from other studies indicate that this trend may also be present in other Asian cultures. It is important that career counselling programmes help unlink degrees and diplomas from prestige attributes, highlighting the value of all courses of study.

The findings pertaining to vocational education gain special significance in the context of policy formulations that give high priority to vocational education. Vigorous debates have ensued around the theme of vocational versus general education. On the one hand, it is argued that general education is characterized by greater “portability” across one’s life and from job to job (e.g., Tilak, 2003). On the other hand, imbibing specific job-relevant skills that can make the worker more readily suitable for a given job are portrayed as a significant advantage of vocational training (e.g., Yang, 1998). The dynamics of the contemporary labour market are such that wide-ranging job opportunities are available to individuals possessing vocational qualifications. As a result, significant resources are directed particularly by developing nations to set up systems for vocational training.

However, what is often disregarded is that social cognitions play a mediating role in the manner in which young people and their families perceive vocational education. Prestige attributions push vocational education and vocationally oriented jobs to the bottom of occupational prestige hierarchies. The prospect of “early earning” has a powerful appeal for families from lower-income groups. At the same time, prestige hierarchies are so deeply entrenched that young people who have graduated from academic streams are likely to be offered more prestigious jobs and earn more than those who have taken up training through vocational streams. This could have two serious outcomes that have implications both for policymakers and career counsellors. Firstly, vocational education is at risk of creating a sense of second-class citizenship among workers, promoting the erroneous belief that vocational training is meant only for “poor students” who need to begin earning as soon as possible (Blaug, 1973). The second outcome could be seen in societies where SES does not create stark social class differences between groups. In such contexts, the preference for “university education” may supersede and the demand for vocational

education itself might be low (Arulmani & Abdulla, 2007). As a result, investments in establishing infrastructure for vocational training may fail to attract sufficient enrolments.

I conclude by returning to the theme of this Special Issue — the internationalization of career counselling. Internationalization is quite often the result of economic forces that move workers and their families around the globe. In the midst of the frenetic hustle of economic growth, it must be remembered that career counselling could remain the handmaiden of the labour market. While it is essential that the contemporary career counsellor is aware of economic trends, it is also important to remember that the purpose of career counselling is not merely to direct a work force as per the dictates of the labour market. Career choice is often influenced strongly by labour market cycles and entry into the world of work may in effect be a response to the short-term interests of employers. The possibility of career development being a mechanism for learning, personal growth, and potential realization could diminish in importance. As a result, large numbers of career aspirants (the majority perhaps) whose interest and aptitude profiles do not match prevailing labour market demands may be impelled to choose careers that are popular — forsaking careers for which they might have a higher suitability. Striving to achieve this ideal would allow career counselling to be a bridge that carries the individual into a person-centred engagement with the labour market.

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### 事業輔導國際化：連繫印度的文化影響與勞動市場需求

事業輔導國際化牽涉對事業輔導員角色的討論，而這又要同時照顧根深柢固的文化影響與勞動市場的需求兩方面。本文利用社會認知環境這概念，檢視圍繞印度高中學生和年輕成年人就業準備方面的問題。文章以印度一項大型調查的數據，探討社會認知變項如何造成印度擇業者及其家人的職業地位層級觀念，而這觀念又會影響就學選擇。文章展示了不同社經地位（包括低、中、中高）組別的職業偏好，這些職業或需要大學資歷，或只需要職業訓練。本文指出，必須照顧社會認知環境和職業偏好來制定政策和分配資源，以推廣職業訓練。本文尤對印度以至廣大亞洲地區提供職業服務方面有參考價值。