
UNIT 3 COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE FOR CAREER PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will be dealing with counseling and guidance for career planning and decision making. We start with definition and description of counseling and guidance. Then we take up career planning and within this present the inter relationship between counseling and career planning followed by presenting of inter relationship between guidance and career planning. Then we take up decision making and within this we put forward two principles viz., declaring a decision and working a decision. Within declaring a decision we discuss the framing of the decision, the right people and the right choice to make. Following this we take up working a decision within which we discuss a complete set of alternatives, values against which to make trade off and information that describes the value of each alternative.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you will be able to:

- Define counseling and guidance;
- Differentiate between counseling and guidance;
- Explain the concept of career planning;
- Elucidate the relationship between counselling and career planning;
- Explain the relationship between guidance and career planning; and
- Discuss and understand the process of decision making.

3.2 COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE

Counselling is a process that focuses on enhancing the psychological well being of the client, such that the client is then able to reach their full potential. This is achieved by the counsellor facilitating your personal growth, development, and self understanding, which in turn empowers you to adopt more constructive life practices.

The purpose of guidance is to provide ‘learning experiences to enable clients to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies related to making personal, educational and career decisions’

Guidance includes, but is not limited to, educational guidance and counselling services staffed by trained professionals.

Career planning is a lifelong process, which includes choosing an occupation, getting a job, growing in our job, possibly changing careers, and eventually retiring. We will focus on career choice and the process one goes through in selecting an occupation. This may happen once in our lifetimes, but it is more likely to happen several times as we first define and then redefine ourselves and our goals.

Career development and the career planning process include a number of specific steps that help to identify personal skills and attributes. Finding out how those skills can be utilised in the job market is accomplished by researching a number of career fields that are of interest to you and then by gaining experience in those fields and/or speaking to people currently working in the field.

Career counselors provide mainly career counseling outside the school setting. Their chief focus is helping individuals with career decisions. Vocational counselors explore and evaluate the client’s education, training, work history, interests, skills, and personality traits. They may arrange for aptitude and achievement tests to help the client make career decisions. They also work with individuals to develop their job search skills and assist clients in locating and applying for jobs. In addition, career counselors provide support to people experiencing job loss, job stress, or other career transition issues.

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face to face or at a distance.

A decision is a choice between two or more alternatives. If you only have one alternative, you do not have a decision.

Decision making can be regarded as the mental processes (cognitive process) resulting in the selection of a course of action among several alternative scenarios. Every decision making process produces a final choice. The output can be an action or an opinion of choice.

3.2.1 Counselling

Counselling is a process that focuses on enhancing the psychological well-being of the client, such that the client is then able to reach their full potential. This is achieved by the counsellor facilitating your personal growth, development, and self-understanding, which in turn empowers you to adopt more constructive life practices.

In simple terms, counselling involves one person (the counsellor) helping another person (the client) to work through some difficult or painful emotional, behavioural or relationship problem or difficulty. That is the form of individual counselling.

Counselling may be helpful in a number of ways. It can enable you to develop a clearer understanding of your concerns and help you acquire new skills to better manage personal and educational issues. The counsellor can offer a different perspective and help you think of creative solutions to problems. Sharing your thoughts and feelings with someone not personally involved in your life can be most helpful.

1) Confidentiality

The counsellor treats all the information shared by the client as confidential material. The counsellors are involved in case consultations and supervision for the purposes of best practice. These meetings involve discussion of clients concerns with the aim of formulating the best possible assessment and intervention plan. Where possible, the identifying personal information is removed from the discussion.

Counselling takes place in a confidential meeting, in a quiet room, and is subject to a code of ethics which specifies what the counsellor can and cannot morally do in that context.

2) Restrictions on the Release of Information

Information that client share with the counsellor will not be released to anyone outside without their prior written permission, except under certain unusual and rare circumstances where the well being of client matters. Client is free to discuss any concerns regarding confidentiality with the counsellor.

3) The Counselling Process

The counselling process depends upon the individual counsellor, the individual client and the specific issue. However, there is a general counselling process that the counsellors will follow:

- Background information collection
- Identification of core issues
- Case formulation
- Goal setting for the therapeutic process
- Implementation of intervention
- Evaluation of intervention
- Closure

No further counselling is required at this time, if during the initial interview you have been able to clarify your concerns and plan an appropriate course of action.

Further appointments are needed to continue to explore the issues before reaching a decision. A second appointment will be made with client by the counselor.

Alternative services are appropriate and the counsellor will assist the client to identify specific resources to consider and pursue.

4) **Differing Counselling Approaches**

Counsellors work from differing theoretical approaches. Different counsellors will place varying levels of emphasis on behaviour, on thinking and/or on emotional aspects. All counsellors have the central goal to assist the client in increasing your sense of well-being.

5) **Length of Counseling**

Change does not happen quickly for most of us. The length of treatment depends on a number of variables. Variables include: the severity of the problem, the motivation of the client, the type of problem and the age of the client. The more focused and limited the problem being addressed, the shorter treatment can be. The more the treatment addresses healing emotional injuries, the longer it is likely to take.

3.2.2 Guidance

The purpose of guidance is to provide ‘learning experiences to enable clients to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies related to making personal, educational and career decisions’ (Clark, 1999, p. 10)

Guidance includes, but is not limited to, educational guidance and counselling services staffed by trained professionals. It can also include:

- Human resource development (HRD) work
- Assessment processes and appraisals by managers
- Advice and guidance from managers
- Advice and guidance from shop stewards or other trade union representatives
- Guidance which is a part of educational or training courses, both in-service and provided externally
- Peer guidance and counselling, carried out by fellow-employees etc.
- Mentoring by appointing a more experienced person who can listen, advise and give feedback when the mentee asks for this
- Self-assessment methods (paper or electronic)
- Information resources such as careers libraries
- Telephone helplines.

The activities of guidance that can be carried out or organised by employers include:

- Giving information on learning opportunities;
- Giving advice on the choice of learning opportunities;
- Assessing the educational and training needs of individual employees;
- Counselling to examine barriers to learning and ways to overcome these;
- Careers education in the sense of suitable courses to help employees progress within the firm;
- Referral to other agencies, including professional guidance services;
- Feedback to learning providers on courses needed and the suitability of those already on offer;
- Follow-up to find out what decisions were taken and what progress was made by individual employees.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Fill in the blanks
 - a) Counselling involves _____ person helping another person.
 - b) Counselling takes place in a _____ meeting and in a quiet room.
 - c) Counselling is a process that focuses on enhancing the _____ well-being of the client.
 - d) The counselling process depends upon the _____ counsellor.
 - e) _____ education in the sense of suitable courses to help employees progress within the firm.

3.3 CAREER PLANNING

Career planning is a lifelong process, which includes choosing an occupation, getting a job, growing in our job, possibly changing careers, and eventually retiring. We will focus on career choice and the process one goes through in selecting an occupation. This may happen once in our lifetimes, but it is more likely to happen several times as we first define and then redefine ourselves and our goals.

Career development and the career planning process include a number of specific steps that help to identify personal skills and attributes. Finding out how those skills can be utilised in the job market is accomplished by researching a number of career fields that are of interest to you and then by gaining experience in those fields and/or speaking to people currently working in the field.

The career planning process is comprised of four steps. Whether or not you choose to work with a professional, or work through the process on your own is less important than the amount of thought and energy you put into choosing a career.

Career planning means know about yourself, explore your options, make decisions and move towards your goal.



1) **Self**

Evaluate who you are as a person. This involves taking a personal inventory of which you are and identify your individual values, interests, skills, and personal qualities. What makes you tick as a person? You will look at those personal attributes under a microscope and come up with key qualities you can identify and use in your search for the perfect career. Career assessments may be required to promote a better understanding of personal attributes and skills.

The individual should gather information about oneself. That is self assessment in terms of their interests, values, roles, skills / aptitudes, preferred environments, developmental needs and their realities.

2) **Options**

The individual should be able to explore the various occupations in which they are interested. The exploration should be in each and every field the individual is interested and keen. After the area of occupation is chosen, the research or a survey on industries and labor market should be done to see in which they would like to work.

Once the individual is clear about the specific information on the area to be chosen, he / she can go in for part time work, internships and can also go in for volunteering jobs or opportunities.

3) **Match**

After the option is clear to the individuals, they will be able to identify the possible occupations and evaluate the opportunities within that occupation. The individual can explore the alternatives available, and thus chose both a short term and long term option.

4) **Action**

The individuals in order to reach and achieve their goal have to explore and investigate the sources for additional training and education. They would have to develop a job search strategy, write an effective resume, gather information regarding company and prepare themselves for job interviews.

3.3.1 Interrelation between Counseling and Career Planning

Career planning is a process in which an individual decides and chooses an occupation of his / her interests with the help of counselor. Counsellor helps the individual to realise, explore and analyse within themselves, their interest and their capability.

Career counseling is an interactive process by which counselors and clients exchange and explore information concerning clients' backgrounds, experiences, interests, abilities, self esteem, and other personal characteristics that help or inhibit their work readiness and career planning. Career counseling is a systematic approach to providing information and advice to clients in such areas as outreach programs, training, internships, apprenticeships, and job placement.

Although the career counselor's primary concern is the client's career development, counselors also may provide screening and referral services to employers. Counselors use information gathered through assessment to understand and respond to clients' needs and concerns. Clients use this information to understand themselves better, clarify their goals and perspectives, and make plans for the future.

Counselors provide individuals and groups with career and educational counseling. Counselors use interviews, counseling sessions, interest and aptitude assessment tests, and other methods to evaluate and advise their clients. They also operate career information centers and career education programs. Often, counselors work with students who have academic and social development problems or other special needs.

Career counselors provide mainly career counseling outside the school setting. Their chief focus is helping individuals with career decisions. Vocational counselors explore and evaluate the client's education, training, work history, interests, skills, and personality traits. They may arrange for aptitude and achievement tests to help the client make career decisions. They also work with individuals to develop their job-search skills and assist clients in locating and applying for jobs. In addition, career counselors provide support to people experiencing job loss, job stress, or other career transition issues.

Counselors help the individual to plan their career in a structured manner.

The process begins with self assessment. Steps involved by counselor in a Career Planning Process are:

Step One: Self Assessment

The first and foremost step in career planning is to know and assess yourself. You need to collect information about yourself while deciding about a particular career option. You must analyse your interests, abilities, aptitudes, desired lifestyle, and personal traits and then study the relationship between the career opted for and self.

Self assessment involves the close examination of core interests, personality traits, skills, values, and beliefs. These are all important variables in the decision-making process; they reflect your innermost needs and desires, and, most importantly, will lead you to favour some occupational fields over others.

Once self assessment is complete, you may begin generating and exploring a wide range of career options. By obtaining information, you will be able to sort through your initial list of occupations and reduce the options to your most favoured ones. To focus on the most appealing career option, you need to access detailed information by engaging in a more rigorous research endeavour.

This step involves exploring the options on your list by obtaining occupational information, such as education and training required to enter into the field, job tasks, and salary potential. It is at this point that you will be ready to decide on the most promising career option that matches your profile most closely and that affords you the greatest chances of succeeding. Keep in mind that it is also important to identify a few back up choices.

You will then set up an action plan that will outline the next most crucial steps for you to take in meeting your educational and / or occupational goals.

Finally, evaluate the outcomes of your efforts and determine whether you are indeed on the right path. If you think the educational and / or occupational path decided upon earlier is not appropriate, at this point, you may go back a step or two and decide on an alternative, and more personally satisfying, course of action.

Step Two: Goal Setting

Set your goals according to your academic qualification, work experience, priorities and expectations in life. Once your goal is identified, then you determine the feasible ways and objectives how to realise it.

Step Three: Academic/Career Options

Narrow your general occupational direction to a particular one by an informatory decision making process. Analyse the various career avenues by keeping in mind your present educational qualification and what more academic career courses you need to acquire for it.

Step Four: Plan of Action

Recognise those industries and particular companies where you want to get into. Make the plan a detailed one so that you can determine for how many years you are going to work in a company in order to achieve maximum success, and then switch to another. Decide where you would like to see yourself after five years and in which position. If you are looking for career in education, then you must research about the various leading companies and industries and abroad to get into the best company.

3.3.2 Interrelation between Guidance and Career Planning

Choosing the right career can be a very daunting task especially in a world which offers an array of paths, all of which seem to be leading to a golden goal. Careers can actually make or break one's life, so it is important to make the right choice. Career guidance can help you in pursuing the right courses, in the right colleges or institutes and can guide you in choosing a suitable career.

Career planning is an exercise that is well worth the time invested in it because it sets you going on the path that leads to where you would like to go. This exercise provides you with a lot of clarity regarding your career objectives as well and it best done before you embark on your job search.

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face-face or at a distance.

Choosing a career is a difficult matter, in the best of times. Add to this opinions of friends and parents, and the young person is caught up in a confusing situation where making a decision is almost impossible. We are providing here a model that can help young generation to choose a career, gain competencies required for it, make decisions, set goals and then take an action. This information is helpful not only for fresher but also throughout one's life.

Choosing a career is a multi-step process. It involves gathering information on a number of things, the first being yourself.

Often most people get stuck at the very beginning of the planning process itself. There seem to be too many choices that are throwing themselves at you with all kinds of material gains, fame and wealth, comfort and luxury, glamour and beauty. From acting to singing, writing to banking, software programming to business, choices confuse you. Naturally feelings of self-doubt might creep in at this stage. Am I good enough for that, you may ask, or how do I become successful at this. After some time of pondering over many career paths you may end up thinking that maybe you are no good for any of these things after all.

Here is where a bit of career planning helps. There are two ways of starting off. One is to find out what you really like doing and do it irrespective of the gains and growth patterns and the second is to find out what really motivates you, find out which among the careers gives you what you want and build up competencies for it. Either way you will get what you want – in the first method the journey itself is your reward (though many will discourage you on this path, but don't worry, many have tread this path and quite successfully at that too) and in the second you are carefully working your way to your reward which could be clearly spelt out to be a consequence of your work or occupation.

Whichever path you choose, it is most important to know your individual strengths and weaknesses. Sit down and assess yourself honestly. Think of all your accomplishments, of all the compliments you got, of all the work that really inspired you, of the times when you worked with passion at and jot them all down. You will find that as you note down your victories, your achievements etc a pattern will emerge. You can find that you are good at organising, at making people comfortable, at leading, at solving puzzles, at physical activity, at playing music or games. Each of these represents a career option by itself or throws up some characteristic in you - qualities that could be good assets in your future career options.

Now list out things that motivate you, that you aspire for, your dreams – things you would want more than anything else in the world. Find your fit between the person you are and the dream you wish to achieve. As this picture gets clearer you become more aware, confident and purposeful. Attributes that serve you

well along the way. You have now formed a sharp picture of yourself with specific saleable qualities.

Based on your aspiration level and your aptitude, you can also identify the careers that offer the kind of lifestyle or returns that you wish. If you wish to frequently travel and be in command of a dynamic business you can zero down to careers in marketing with a goal to set up your own firm or to head a large company (the same may not be possible if you inherently like to paint for long hours). It is best to be honest with yourself at this stage because most people take decisions based on glamorous misconceptions about certain careers and later change them. For example if you wish to be an airhostess, check out the sources available to the kind of work that is associated with being an airhostess. Only if you really enjoy doing that kind of work and the rewards that come with it must you opt for it. Else look further for what really fits you. Growth, rewards, recognition and most importantly job satisfaction and a good quality of life come from one thing – loving your job.

Having decided on a particular direction, build competencies. Specific careers need specific education and training. Whichever area you choose to be in, you will fare well if you strive to be the best in it. Leave your individual brand on it. Learn the ropes by acquiring information, by taking up courses, by taking up internships and summer jobs, by learning the economics of the job, by adding special skills that help in handling the job with greater proficiency.

All careers without exception would certainly require a good writing and verbal communicating ability so please work on that, a pleasing and well-mannered personality, a professional work ethic and good inter-personal skills. Work on these important soft skills along with as you plan your career.

Self Assessment Questions

Fill in the blanks

- 1) The career planning process is comprised of _____ steps.
- 2) Evaluate who _____ are as a person.
- 3) Career counseling is an _____ process.
- 4) Career _____ can help you pursue the right courses, in the right colleges or institutes and can guide you in choosing a suitable career.
- 5) Choosing a career is a _____ process.

3.4 DECISION MAKING

A decision is a choice between two or more alternatives. If you only have one alternative, you do not have a decision.

Decision making can be regarded as the mental processes (cognitive process) resulting in the selection of a course of action among several alternative scenarios. Every decision making process produces a final choice. The output can be an action or an opinion of choice.

Problem solving and decision-making are important skills for business and life. Problem-solving often involves decision-making, and decision-making is especially important for management and leadership. There are processes and techniques to improve decision-making and the quality of decisions.

Decision making is more natural to certain personalities, so these people should focus more on improving the quality of their decisions. People that are less natural decision-makers are often able to make quality assessments, but then need to be more decisive in acting upon the assessments made. Problem-solving and decision-making are closely linked, and each requires creativity in identifying and developing options, for which the brainstorming technique is particularly useful.

A high quality decision comes with a warrant: a guarantee. Not a guarantee of a certain outcome remember this is the real world we're talking about, and there are certain things that just aren't knowable until after they happen—but a warranty that the process you used to arrive at a choice was a good one.

This level of confidence implies a process: a set of steps and rules that provide an assurance of thoroughness and rigor. This means breaking decisions down into component parts and doing one thing at a time.

With a process or framework, you have the mechanism you need to warrant the quality of your own decisions. Perhaps more importantly, you also have a common language and set of mental models that makes conversations about decisions more efficient and effective. This common understanding of decision processes, criteria, and roles avoids many of the common organisational decision traps, allowing people in your organisations to spend their conversational energies on creating better alternatives and validating assumptions and ultimately warranting their own decisions.

The framework we use for breaking down and working decisions of virtually any size and complexity begins with two large ideas: declaring a decision and working a decision. Each of those larger elements is then broken down into three sub components, which are illustrated in the following diagram.



3.4.1 Declare a Decision

1) **Frame the Problem**

What are you deciding and why? What shouldn't you be deciding and why? What's not in the box is as important as what is. Without a good definition of the problem or opportunity to be worked, there is no possibility that you'll reliably reach a high quality decision.

Frames are mental structures we create to simplify and organise our lives. They help us reduce complexity. That's the good news and the root of another set of problems. The way people frame a problem greatly influences the solution they will ultimately choose. And the frames that people or organisations routinely use for their problems control how they will react to almost everything they encounter."

2) **The Right People**

If you're a single actor, or hold all the prerogatives of a dictator, this one is easy. In other cases, you'll want to put some thought into declaring who needs to be involved in what steps of this decision. Too few, or miss some, and you risk the problems of rework, low adoption rate and poor buy in. Too many too much inclusion and you invite the possibility of an unnecessarily painful or drawn out decision process.

3) **The Right Process**

It would depend on the decision situation. Making a high quality decision doesn't have to be time consuming. In some cases, the best process might just be a coin toss or relying on some rules of thumb. In other cases, the only way to work a decision is to really work it, and that will take time.

This element of declaration pulls the frame and people together into a coherent whole that will govern how you will reason this decision through.

3.4.2 Work a Decision

1) **A Complete Set of Alternatives**

The more options you generate, the greater your chance of finding an excellent one. "Collectively exhaustive" means that the alternatives you're considering fill the frame: a rational observer would conclude that you've thought of everything that matters. "Mutually exclusive" means that the alternatives are unique and different from each other: they're not just restatements of the same choice.

2) **Values against which to make Tradeoff**

Values define your preferences among alternatives. They are your criteria. Values can be expressed by "attributes." Attributes are characteristics of the outcomes that we find desirable or undesirable. They typically occur over time and may have some degree of uncertainty associated with them.

3) **Information that describes the value of each alternative**

Good decision making requires not only knowing the facts, but understanding the limits of your knowledge. The most valuable insights are often found in exploring uncertainties and "disconfirming" information.

A high quality decision process highlights the frame, potential alternatives, and key assumptions the drive value. This allows leaders to spend their time declaring the right decisions, providing a set of common criteria, and testing the key assumptions of each decision.

Self Assessment Questions

Answer the following statements in True or False

- 1) A decision is a choice between two or more alternatives. (True/False)
- 2) There are no processes for changing a decision or its quality. (True/False)
- 3) Frames help us reduce complexity. (True/False)
- 4) Mutually exclusive means that the alternatives are unique and different from each other. (True/False)
- 5) Values are different from attributes. (True/False)

3.5 LET US SUM UP

Counselling is a process that focuses on enhancing the psychological well-being of the client, such that the client is then able to reach their full potential. This is achieved by the counsellor facilitating your personal growth, development, and self-understanding, which in turn empowers you to adopt more constructive life practices.

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The framework we use for breaking down and working decisions of virtually any size and complexity begins with two large ideas: declaring a decision and working a decision.

3.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Define counseling and guidance.
- 2) Describe the characteristic features of counseling and guidance.
- 3) What is career planning?
- 4) Discuss the relationship between counseling and career planning.
- 5) Elucidate the relationship between guidance and career planning.
- 6) What is involved in the process of decision making?
- 7) Discuss declaring a decision.
- 8) Explain working a decision.

3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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