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Education and Employment: the influences on young people's career decision making in Antigua and the UK

John J. O. L. Swift

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2009

Abstract

The thesis looks at the issue of career choice and decision-making through the eyes of young people in Antigua and in England. It provides an account of their views and attitudes in relation to various jobs and careers and the factors which have influenced these views. It asks young people about the way in which they are making their career choices and the sort of factors which influence them into making these choices.

The study begins by first providing a brief overview of education and training in both countries and the way in which education is presented in both countries as being essential for economic growth. At the centre of this study is the realisation that after many years of vocational initiatives young people still appear to be reluctant to enter vocational courses and or careers. Nonetheless, from a socio/economic viewpoint, various governments over the last quarter of a century, at least, have placed much emphasis on the relationship between education and the country's economic performance.

The three specific aims of the study are:

- To explore young peoples' employment aspirations in Antigua and the UK
- To investigate young people's attitudes towards jobs and careers
- To evaluate the various influences on their career choices.

Since vocational education prepares individuals for gainful employment, the participants were therefore questioned about their career aspirations; particularly in terms of whether they are considering academic or vocational type courses or careers. In order to ascertain if the participants had made informed choices/decisions regarding subjects and career choices it was necessary to look at the types of information with which they are provided as well as the sources of the information. The research also questions whether the information provided is adequate and without bias.

Conducted within two schools and two colleges in the North of England and two schools and a college in the Caribbean island of Antigua, the study employs the use of both Questionnaires and interviews so as to obtain a rich texture of data. However, as it seeks to give a voice to the young people themselves, it leans more towards the qualitative side of the interview data.

The study reveals that the term vocational is not widely understood and attributes this to the narrow approach of careers education and guidance being provided to young people. Thus, it raises questions of how well young people are being prepared for the world of work. It however has found that young people do not make their choices based upon whether the career is a vocational or academic career. They are more concerned about the money and status which a career or job earns them and they are more likely to take advice from parents, siblings and even friends than from careers advisers.

Acknowledgements

I am gratefully thankful to my Director of Studies Dr. Gill Trorey whose refreshing suggestions and inspiring support helped me throughout the time on this study and lately Prof. Mark Halstead who took over on Dr Trorey's retirement – a big thank you.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to Prof. Cedric Cullingford, my Second Supervisor (a man with tremendous support, guidance and encouragement), who inspired my confidence and re-energised my motivation to carry on at a very low point in my study – I thank you very much indeed. And to Miss Joanne Beaumont who also provided additional support and guidance in the careers field.

I would also like to thank Ms. Lyn Ashmore for all the help and support which she has given to me – a friend in need is a friend indeed. Thank you for being a true friend to me.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the schools, colleges and especially the students (who shall remain anonymous) who took part in this study without whom the study could not have taken place. Their willingness to share their understandings, experiences, ideas and their time has been greatly valued and I wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

My gratitude goes to my family who gave me enormous encouragement and for putting up with my grumpy attitude throughout the ups-and-downs of this study. I would also like to say special thanks to my mother Marjorie and my wife Delores, without whose enormous support I could not have attempted this Study – I love you both very much. And last but not least, to myself for not giving up, it would have been so easy to do so.

To all a very heart felt thank you and may God bless you all

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study looks at how students in schools and colleges in the UK and the Caribbean island of Antigua perceive how they are prepared for the world of work, and how they are influenced in making their career choices. The way in which different jobs and types of employment are perceived by young people is a central factor in relation to career selection and choice. It is therefore the intention to question the young people participating in the study regarding whether they are considering academic or vocational type courses or careers, and what their attitudes are toward these. Attitudes are important in this context, as it has been suggested by Hodkinson (1995) that the number of courses, training schemes or jobs on offer is irrelevant if young people do not perceive them as being suitable for their needs. Students before and after leaving compulsory schooling are included in this study, thereby capturing any changing trends or differing views that might have existed between different age groups and phases of education. This study can therefore be viewed as one that looks at the issue of career decision making through the eyes of young people in England and in Antigua.

This chapter gives a brief introduction to the study and how it came about. It briefly explores the context of the study and the main issues that are involved. Career decision making is set in the context of the UK and Antiguan school systems, and how young people are prepared for the world of work. The system of post-compulsory education and training, with its plethora of qualifications and awards, is introduced and evaluated in relation to economic factors. Finally, the aims of the study and the methodology are introduced.

1.2 Rationale of the study

For 19 years the researcher worked at a college in Antigua teaching automotive engineering. For the most part the students who entered the Engineering Department were young people (mostly male) who had not done well at school academically; sometimes they had not even finished school. There was a perception that, when individuals who had done well at school wanted to enter the engineering department, they were usually persuaded by the college's heads to transfer instead to the A level Department.

There was also an understanding that the attitude of the general public in Antigua was that anyone who went to the college to do engineering was not intellectually 'very bright' or well educated; those who went to the Commercial Department were considered slightly better; and those that went to the A Level Department were the 'intelligent' ones.

Between 1998 and 2000 the researcher pursued the BEd and MEd degrees at the University of Huddersfield. During this period much reading was done around the research literature relating to the 'academic and vocational divide'. It became evident from the literature that the general attitude, as well as the comments being voiced by individuals, was that vocational areas of study were being, as the researcher considered, unfairly discredited both in Antigua and the UK. In addition, young people in both countries appeared for the most part only to enter vocational courses and careers as a second option. Was there a stigma attached to technical and vocational education and training or careers? Why were young people not prepared to take up vocational courses in an age where everything seems to depend upon technology? Were they being influenced by others?

It was these questions, together with the realisation that vocational disciplines were at risk of being regarded as insignificant, that spurred the researcher to study this in more depth. This was coupled with an awareness of the need to promote vocational education and training as relevant to the survival of industry and economic growth. There appears to be a need to disabuse people of prejudices held in relation to technical and vocational education, with the aim of bridging the so called educational divide.

1.3 Making career choices

One of the greatest steps in the life of an average young person between the ages of 16-19 is the move from school to the world of work. Wright (2005), in looking at the decision-making of young people in education and training, notes that the 14-19 phase is described as a period of transition. Lumby and Foskett (2005) agree. As Wright goes on to point out, this shift may be any of, or a combination of, the following:

- youth to adulthood
- compulsory schooling to employment
- compulsory schooling into post-compulsory education and training.

The decisions that young people make during this phase are influenced by a range of factors which have varying importance to individuals at different times and will be influenced by a variety of different situations and contexts.

Age 16 is seen as the main point of decision-making for young people in the UK. At this point students decide whether to continue in education and training, go into full-time employment, or combine the two activities by taking a job with training opportunities which may take the form of 'day-release' to college. If remaining in education, there is a concomitant decision to be made of which pathway to follow: eventually academic or vocational type subjects. However, this decision has resonance beyond that of the individual. Evans (1993), for example, regards this transition as 'a critical interface between education and industry', in that the decisions young people make will affect the quality and quantity of available employees. Evans goes on to point out that these transitions are 'essential to the development of a high skill economy too important to be left to chance' (p.198). Furthermore, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) has noted:

...16 is a critical point where for some, problems that have been brewing for years reach a crisis, and for others, problems begin that could be avoided.
(SEU 1999, p.8)

This is an important point, in that young people leaving the relative security of the school system could be 'led astray' and be lost to the economy. However, it may be unnecessarily pessimistic in that, for some young people who have not done well in

school, the opportunity to leave and take up a vocational job or training scheme which interests them and suits their abilities may be the making of them.

One scenario is illustrated by Willis (1977). In an illuminating account which explains how the 'habitus' of a town in the British Midlands (which he refers to as 'Hammertown') contributed to the social reproduction of white working class males, Willis (1977) describes how these complacent 'lads' left school and entered gainful employment. *Learning to Labour* (Willis 1977) has thus been described by Griffin (2005) as being about:

...a group of 12 white working-class young men who rejected the possibilities of academic advancement offered by education, mobilising a counter-school culture based around the importance of 'having a laff', pride in working class, masculine, practical abilities, and a celebration of an assertive masculinity...

(p.292)

These 'lads' were more interested in 'mucking around' than in school work; they saw manual work as being 'real jobs for men' and therefore gaining qualifications was not important to them. Thus, they found school boring and sought every opportunity to cause a distraction. Drawing on the 'cultural capital' of the working class, these 'lads' defied authority and tried to identify themselves with the shop-floor culture of the adult world by smoking, drinking alcohol, not wearing uniform and using indecent language. Some of this negative attitude towards schooling still exists in secondary schools today and, according to Rutter et al (1979, p.199), may be attributed to the compulsory nature of schooling.

Hodkinson (1995) states that one of the ways that decisions about future careers are made is from an informed position where:

...the source of information is from an insider who has no vested interest in "selling" a vacancy and whose judgement they can trust because they know them personally.

(p.3)

However, in schools this may not always be the case, as there may be an incentive to retain students in the school sixth form, if it has one, rather than encouraging students to attend the local technical college. Nevertheless, there are many other factors that

influence young people's decision making processes, or indeed, conscious decisions may not be made at all.

While pointing out that there was a high dropout rate from school in the mid 1980s, the SEU (1999) suggests that the number of students deciding to continue into post-16 education may have increased as a result of the introduction of GCSEs in 1988. Statistics subsequently published by the Learning and Skills Council do show an increase in the number of students staying on into post-compulsory education since that date. Finegold (1993) has noted that the introduction of continuous assessment has also had a significant impact on the numbers staying on. However, there have also been suggestions that this increase in staying in school may have resulted from the inability to find employment. Would students leave education if they could get jobs?

As Bloomer (1997) states, competing views as to the purpose of post-compulsory and even compulsory education are at the heart of the post-16 debate. However, Williams (1961, p125) highlights the fact that 'there are clear and obvious connections between the quality of a culture and the quality of its system of education'. While stating that 'we cannot look at the aims of education as abstract definitions', he suggests that at least three factors should be at work, in conjunction with each other, in any educational system:

- *a child must be taught, first, the accepted behaviour and values of his society*
- *the general knowledge and attitudes appropriate to an educated man*
- *a particular skill by which he will earn his living and contribute to the welfare of his society.*

(adapted from Williams, 1961, pp.125 – 126)

Wellington (1993) points out that many people view preparation for the world of work as the prime aim of education. He cites a study carried out by Entwistle (1970) which showed that many parents (and their children) felt that schools should teach things that would enable students to get as good a job as possible upon completion of school. More (1980, p. 14), on the other hand, sees 'no underlying continuity or causal link between education and production in the sense that educational practices develop skills or attitudes that are appropriate to corresponding sections of the occupational structure'. However, Wellington (1993) notes that, due to relevant vocational subjects being viewed as lacking

value, the types of subjects chosen by students are not necessarily the most relevant for the job market.

1.4 Education 14-19: Some Comparisons between the UK and Antigua

It might be useful to provide a comparison between the UK and the Antiguan education systems. The table below outlines some fundamental similarities and differences between the two systems and is based on the UK government’s policy responses to the three challenges which have impacted upon vocational education and Training (VET) since the mid 1980s (namely: raising participation and attainment in full-time post 16 education and training; closing the academic/vocational divide; and preparing young people for employment).

Table 1.1 Comparisons of the UK and Antiguan Education Systems

Participation and Attainment	UK	Antigua
	Compulsory schooling 5-16 Progression by age automatic	Compulsory schooling 5-16 (but may be allowed to continue to 21) Progression dependent on exam performance
	High % continue in full time education post 16	Medium level participation in full time education post 16 (although difficult to ascertain)
	Age 16 -5 GCSEs A-C (attained by 68.3% of all pupils in English schools in 2008) High attainers go on to academic pathway Low attainers go on to vocational courses or work	Age 15-21 – 5 CXCs 1-3 (attained by 70.8% of all pupils in 2008) High attainers go on to academic pathway Low attainers go on to vocational courses or work
Academic / Vocational Divide	National Qualifications Framework Pre-16 Vocational pathway - diplomas alongside academic	Regional Qualifications Framework (currently being developed) Pre-16 Technical and Vocational options in all government schools

	<p>Post 16 Three pathways (academic, vocational, occupational)</p> <p>5 levels of qualifications – level 1-3 qualifications available in most secondary schools and colleges</p>	<p>Post compulsory- two pathways (academic, vocational)</p> <p>No National Qualifications Framework exists in Antigua but the following qualifications are commonly undertaken:</p> <p>CXC Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Exam (CAPE) GCE A levels City and Guilds ORSA Associate Degree Studies 1st and 2nd Year Undergraduate Degree studies</p>
	<p>Institutions: Secondary schools with sixth forms, Sixth Form Colleges, FE Colleges, Tertiary Colleges</p>	<p>Institutions: Secondary school with no sixth forms- some all age.</p> <p>Four post 16 institutions: Antigua State College- A level and vocational courses. Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Studies Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies</p>
Vocational Preparation	Careers guidance statutory	No statutory careers advisory provision but available in some schools.
	Work experience	Informally arranged
	Records of Achievement	School Leaving Certificate- Transcripts are also provided on request

The ensuing discussion in section 1.4.1 – 1.4.4 seeks to provide comparisons between the UK and Antiguan Education Systems.

1.4.1 The perceived need to increase participation and attainment in full time education and training post 16

This has been a key policy thrust in the UK since the mid -1980s and was based on human capital theory and the perceived need to improve attainment to compete economically. In the late 1980s, the rate of full-time participation in education and training post 16 was recognized as a problem by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) with the publication of their world class targets to close the skills gap and the introduction of Core Skills for all 16-19 year olds. The government supported this policy thrust with the publication of the national Target for Education and Training (NTETs) in 1989.

Some academic commentators, including Finegold et al (1990) in their *A British Baccalaureate* attributed low participation rates in full time education post-16 to the early selection system at 16. In this, academically successful students were most likely to continue post 16 and invariably followed academic courses. Those who performed less well at 16 followed a range of pre-vocational course in school sixth forms.

For students in school sixth forms, there was no credible alternative to A level -until the introduction of GNVQ, which was announced in the 1991 White Paper *Education and Training for the 21st century*. These dual purpose qualifications – as preparation for employment or higher education, were initially introduced post 16 (later extended to Key Stage 4 following the reduction of the compulsory core of the National Curriculum) to boost participation and attainment. At that time, there was a government assumption that the A level pathway could not absorb any further innovations, if the A level ‘gold standard’ was to be maintained.

There are a number of research studies which show that, in the UK, young people appear reluctant to take up vocational routes in education and are therefore tending to seek to continue in academic studies instead. This happens whether this is appropriate to them or not (Finegold and Soskice, 1988; Wolf, 2002). Over the years it has been argued that the British low-skills economy, together with the perceived low-status of vocational careers, has been, to some extent, responsible for the poor vocational education and training take-up by young people. Hodkinson (1995) notes that each and every individual has his or her

own unique perceptions which have been formed through various educational and social experiences. However, it must also be pointed out that students will have had experiences common to the particular institution they have attended and thus a common ‘institutional habitus’ (Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2000; Hodkinson and James, 2003).

1.4.2 The need to close the Academic -Vocational Divide

1.4.2.1 A Post 16 Institutional Divide

The academic –vocational divide was also initially at least an institutional one. The academic pathway was usually associated with the school sixth form and Sixth Form Colleges, On the other hand, vocational courses were originally associated with Colleges of Further Education. In recent years, this divide has narrowed as these institutions have widened their course provision.

1.4.2.2 Separate Pathways Post 16

The academic- vocational curriculum divide according to Gleeson and Hodkinson (1996) is a recent development and a direct result of government policy. In 1991, the White Paper *Education and Training for the 21st century* created a triple track National Qualifications Framework which consisted of an academic pathway, a middle vocational pathway with the introduction of GNVQ and a third occupational pathway consisting of National Vocational qualifications.

This National Qualifications Framework can be accessed in Smithers and Robinson (1993, p. 43)

Each of these pathways has a different status with the academic having the highest status, followed by the vocational and with the occupationally specific having the lowest. In addition, academic and vocational courses are perceived as appropriate for different students with different abilities (Bell, 2005)

The SEU (1999) points out that, whereas clear structures are in place for those who do well at school, the route to further and higher education for those who have not achieved

academic success at school is ‘by comparison confused and lacking in clear goals and transition points’ (p.8). They also highlight the existence of a class bias, in that those not involved in further education at all are ‘disproportionately from poor backgrounds in deprived areas’.

1.4.2.3 Reform of Vocational Qualifications

In its reform agenda, the government has favoured separate reform of these pathways essentially to leave the academic intact with a desire to preserve the A level gold standard. The reform of the separate pathways has tended to be piecemeal and incremental rather than root and branch reform which Tomlinson proposed later.

A major problem which has affected vocational qualifications in the past is their excessive number and duplication post 16. As a result, the UK system is extremely complex, sometimes lacking clear progression routes for students and a lack of clarity for employers.

In the UK, the continuing 14-19 debate has recently highlighted some of the ever present tensions between the academic and vocational curricula. One such tension is the question whether the current range of qualifications are suitable for all; whether the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A level) qualifications should continue in their present form, or whether they should be replaced by one common qualification covering both academic and vocational requirements. There have been attempts in the past to do this. For example, General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were introduced in 1992, as alternatives to GCSE and A levels (Esland, 1996; Unwin and Wellington, 2001). They covered fourteen vocational areas, but after a short time were replaced by ‘vocational A levels’.

1.4.2.4 Creating Parity of Esteem to close the Academic-Vocational divide

Serious attempts have been made by the government to raise the status of vocational qualifications in relation to the academic but this problem is long standing and deeply

entrenched. For instance, the range of low level pre-vocational courses which were available in the 1980s- C and G Foundation Programmes, 365 CPVE and the Diploma of Vocational Education lacked currency value with employers.

Later, GNVQs suffered a similar fate to its pre-vocational predecessors and were perceived by some young people to be second best (Bathmaker, 2001 and Ecclestone, 2002).

Faced with the problem of lack of parity of esteem, the Government introduced several strategies to raise the status of vocational qualifications. They included:

- Aligning all qualifications at one of 5 levels on the National Qualifications Framework and establishing equivalences between vocational and academic qualifications.
- Making the assessment of vocational qualifications more rigorous. This applied especially to GNVQs which suffered from ‘academic drift’ (Allen, 2005) which meant that a distinctive feature of the original model- the assessment of process skills was lost to the detriment of students’ learning
- Re-branding vocational courses

According to Unwin (2002), these debates have been misplaced. The UK has embroiled itself in debates about self esteem rather than celebrating skills and vocational knowledge.

On the other hand, the Tomlinson report (2004) was a root and branch reform proposal which proposed a total overhaul of the 14-19 curriculum and qualification system in which separate pathways were replaced by a unified approach.

Allen (2005) criticized the way in which GNVQs, in a search for currency and so-called ‘parity of esteem’, have now become ‘surrogate’ versions of the academic qualifications for which they are supposed to be alternatives. There is no wonder then that these qualifications ceased to exist in 2007. A Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) update on the withdrawal of the qualifications (QCA, 2004) cited the following contributory factors:

- *some students find difficulty in progressing from GNVQs to employment;*
- *learning centres are finding it difficult to manage the content between Foundation and Intermediate levels in some subjects;*
- *some assessments were not appropriate, given the practical nature of the qualification;*
- *schools are finding it difficult to identify realistic work environments and work placements for students;*
- *take-up was low in some subjects, e.g. manufacturing, retail and construction;*
- *the pass rate for many GNVQ titles was a cause for concern;*
- *employers, organisations and professional bodies gave varying levels of support to the qualification;*
- *there was a mismatch between young people's skills and job requirements.*

There were evidently many problems associated with offering pseudo-vocational qualifications in schools, with a mix of internally assessed assignments and externally set and marked unit tests. In addition, both Bathmaker (2001) and Ecclestone (2002) suggest that GNVQs, as well as other vocational qualifications, were viewed as second best by a number of the students they interviewed.

The question may then be asked whether this is still the case, and if so, why vocational subjects are viewed as so lacking in value, and by whom? Conversely, Unwin and Wellington's (2001) research showed that, at least among some young people, there was a positive orientation towards modern apprenticeship and vocational education and training. This research will investigate to what extent this dichotomy is mirrored among the participants in this study.

1.4.3 Vocational Preparation in Schools and Colleges

The move to vocationalise the school curriculum arguably began seriously with Prime Minister Callaghan's Great Debate speech in 1976. Since then, the link between education and the country's economic performance has been a prominent feature of a succession of government White papers. Subsequently, commentators have discussed the purposes of education and its relationship to economic performance (Bloomer, 1997). For some (Wellington, 1993) the preparation of young people for work was one of the key purposes

of education. In the post 16 sector, there have been debates about the nature of vocational education querying whether it should exclusively be about preparation for work (Fuller and Unwin, 2005).

At schools and colleges level, TVEI launched by the MSC in 1983 was the centre piece of the government's strategy to introduce work-related preparation. This was a 14-19 curriculum initiative which was extended from a pilot phase for some LEAs in 1983 to an extension phase which impacted on all LEAs from 1987. Its mission was to promote 'initiative, enterprise and other aspects of personal development'. Not only was it intended to develop students' employability skills, but also to encourage a greater proportion of young people to continue in post-compulsory education. Significantly, this initiative resulted in the promotion of a 14-19 entitlement curriculum which included work experience, careers guidance and counselling and records of achievement, all of which were intended to help students make the transition to adult life including work.

In the UK, Green (1991) suggests that historically, technical education has been viewed with enormous complacency and indifference. He attributes this to the early and successful industrialisation of Britain, which he believes has impacted negatively on educational development due to the way in which the newly successful industrialists adopted 'landed gentry' attitudes towards training. He posits that this served to devalue technical education and training. Recent studies continue to raise concerns over the provision for 14-19 year olds in full time education. Fuller and Unwin (2005) called for a public debate regarding the type of vocational education that England needs in the twenty first century. As Wolf (2002) posits, the UK government seems to have an overarching concern with schooling at the expense of vocational education and training.

There is much recent history about the unease of the quality of vocational education and training in the UK. In 1983, concerned with rising youth unemployment, the Thatcher Government launched the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), as 'a modern apprenticeship for all school leavers' (Ainley, 1990, p.13), while the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) was introduced to assist in preparing the young people who were either staying on at school or college or going into work-based training schemes. These were introduced partly because there were now very few jobs for school leavers without

qualifications. Other, similar schemes followed. Successive UK governments have put more and more funding into vocational initiatives and attempting to make them attractive to young people. These have included the Unified Vocational Preparation (UVP) Scheme, New Training Initiative (NTI), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Modern Apprenticeships, training credits and so on. Core, later Key, Skills were added to provide generic communication, numeracy and ICT proficiency. In fact, the schemes were so numerous that Young (1998) noted:

...academic subject teachers in secondary schools were beginning to feel that their role was being undermined by the wave of new pre-vocational programmes.

(p.1)

Green and Lucas (1999) have referred to this as moving ‘from initiative to initiative in an effort to try to alleviate the youth unemployment crisis which has occurred’ (p.21). Finegold and Soskice (1988) suggest that these initiatives explain in part why many young people, in the late 1980s, were tempted to leave school at the earliest possible moment. They describe them as ‘perverse incentives’ that encouraged young people into work. At the same time, unemployment benefits for 16 and 17 year olds were removed and the availability of skilled jobs limited to YTS apprenticeships, which offered (albeit low) wages.

Thus, research has uncovered issues regarding these apprenticeships (or equivalent) schemes. The ‘bolt on’ effect of the Key Skills in the Modern Apprentice Initiative has been criticised by Hodgson and Spours (2002), while the problems of employers using the scheme as a recruitment process, and the virtual breakdown of the scheme by apprentices remaining with the employer while having chosen to drop out of the training programme (Ashton and Maguire, 1980) have been well documented.

The structural shifts in the economy of the 1980s have thus posed an employment crisis for young people leaving school. But have the various employment initiatives, however flawed, achieved their intended outcomes in providing education and training for all, or encouraging young people to go into vocational fields? Finegold and Soskice (1988) point out that, even with the range of incentives being offered, young people seemed reluctant to

venture into vocational courses, and Wolf (2002) has noted that this is still the case. Again, it was suggested that the cause of this reluctance is that vocational subjects have traditionally been viewed as lacking in value. Unwin and Wellington (2001) have also shown how the vocational divide has been kept alive:

Successive governments since 1991, when the White Paper, Education and Training for the 21st Century (DES/DOE, 1991) laid out a triple-track qualification system based on A-Levels, GNVQs and NVQs, have tried to place young people within one of three pathways: academic; general vocational; and work based.

(Unwin and Wellington, 2001, pp. 3-4)

According to Young (1998), many of the training and employment schemes which have been developed over the years have suffered from weaknesses which have exacerbated the very problems they were created to solve; that is, the lack of parity and low value of vocational education. While these schemes may seem to indicate the government's dedication to vocational education, its reluctance to accept the 2004 Tomlinson report (DfES, 2004) sheds a different light. 'New right' perspectives appear to treat education as being concerned with economic growth. Unwin (2004) argues that the Green Paper *14-19: Extending opportunities, raising standards*, (DfES, 2002) defined vocational education solely in terms of its value to the economy. Similarly, other such references to education and its importance to the economy can be found in former Prime Minister Tony Blair's foreword to the Social Exclusion Unit's report (SEU 1999, p.6) and in former Secretary of State for Education, Ruth Kelly's foreword to the 14-19 Education and Skills Committee report summary (DfES 2005). Keep (2002) goes further when he states that:

...the national skills forecast used by the DfES and its predecessors to plan VET provision have always been based on economic models of growth and occupational change generated by specialist forecasters in bodies such as the Institute of Employment research (IER). Data generated by employers have not played a major part in forecasting before.

(Keep, 2002, p. 464)

In 2005, Fuller and Unwin called for a public debate regarding the type of vocational education that England needs in the 21st century. They argued that vocational education is misunderstood and that, rather than trying to understand it, many educationalists, politicians and media commentators choose to argue over it. Likewise, Lumby and Wilson (2003) point out that, if the government is serious about social justice and

inclusion, it must first address the inequalities that exist within the curriculum, in other words, the academic/vocational divide.

The debate over whether or not the UK needs a more unified system of post-compulsory education and training, which was at its peak during the 1970s and 80s, is still at the forefront of educational policy today. Unwin (2004) highlights that various reports for the past 150 years have looked at the divisions between general and academic education and ‘the lack of robust technical education’ in the UK, yet nothing has been resolved. The fate of the recent Tomlinson Report on 14-19 education (DfES, 2004) stands testament to this. Instead of abolishing the Advanced level GCE as the Tomlinson Report had suggested, the Government has responded with a ‘watered down’ version of the report in the form of a White Paper on reform for 14 – 19 year olds.

As so aptly put by Unwin and Wellington (2001) the constant renaming of the various courses and programmes offered, to improve their status, might well indicate a growing awareness from the Government that the UK needs to reform its education and training provision for young people. For even if the re-branding, as they put it, is due to the Government’s failure to tackle deep seated problems such as social exclusion and inequalities in the labour market, which is stratified along race lines, this too may well point to an imminent need for reform.

The focal point of the debate is the issue of the reluctance of young people to venture into vocational courses as a result of the perceived low value and status accorded to vocational education compared to its academic counterpart. However, recently published policy documents continue to highlight the significance of education to the UK’s economic viability, with particular emphasis on the value of vocational education and training to the economy.

There is clearly a connection between school performance and whether young people continue post-16 education and training. Unwin *et al* (2004) also state that prior educational attainment is ‘the single most important variable which differentiates young people in terms of their life chances’ (p.33). Worth (2002) has shown that students who do not perform well at school may realise that they will have to accept jobs which they

would rather not go into. Nevertheless, statistics from DfES (Figure 1.1) show that more students still choose academic courses over vocational routes.

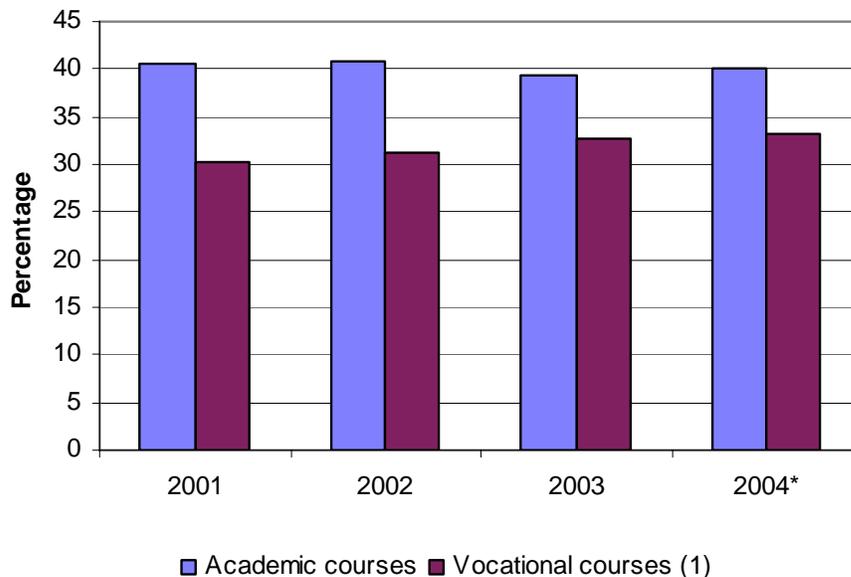


Figure 1.1 Percentage of 16-year-olds in full-time education by type of course, England, 2001 to 2004 (Source: DfES. Trends in Education and Skills)

Faced with a shrinking manufacturing sector and the effects of globalisation, young people leaving school without qualifications have fewer options for employment than in the past. Although many government policy documents stress the relationship between education and the country's economic viability, even today the curriculum remains academically biased, with its emphasis on knowledge-based pathways to higher education. If a lower social market value is generally accorded to vocational pathways, this will send mixed signals to young people who are making their subject, course or career choices. There is a suggestion that many students take up a vocational route as a second best choice, or perhaps as the only one open to them. At present, the perception is that taking academic subjects is seen as the best way to gain employment, even in a vocational field.

1.4.4 Education in Antigua

Antigua, like the other Caribbean islands, is a former British colonial island on which slave plantations were established for the production of sugar. These slaves were imported from West Africa in order to produce sugar to enhance the wealth of Britain.

According to Roberts (2006) formal education was introduced to Antigua in about 1634 by the Anglicans. It was limited to the white planters.

Roberts notes that around the time of Emancipation in 1834, education became an important way of facilitating the transition from slavery to emancipation. Bird (1981) notes the 'heroic efforts' by Moravian and Methodist missionaries and the Church Missionary Society to provide elementary education. Fergus (2003) argues that it could 'scarcely be called education' as the primary interest was rather in making the converts literate enough to read and understand the teachings of the Bible. This view was substantiated by Bird (1981). Dyde (2000) argues that, had it not been for the schools already set up by the missionaries and the Negro Education Grant included in the Emancipation Act, education for the black inhabitants would have been neglected.

The Anglicans opened a Grammar school for boys in 1884. Two years later an English couple similarly opened a school for girls, and by 1890 students were being presented for the Cambridge Junior and Senior certificate examinations (Bird 1981). Dyde (2000) notes that these schools effectively barred the attendance of black students by charging fees and restricting those who were born out of wedlock and thus, as Bird (1981) puts it, serving 'to reinforce the rigid class and colour distinctions of the society' (p.185). To counter this, in 1898 an eighteen year old female black teacher founded the first non-discriminatory secondary school on the island.

Compulsory education was introduced in 1892, two years after the employment of children under the age of nine was prohibited (Dyde, 2000). In 1899 the Moravians started a female Teacher's Training College. Male teachers therefore still had to be trained overseas.

In 1914, the government assumed responsibility for education, as, due to financial constraints, the churches found it difficult to meet the growing demands for education. The 'all age primary schools' run by the churches were mainly attended by the island's poorer children (Bird, 1981; Fergus, 2003; Dyde, 2000).

Bird (1981) explains that very little development of education occurred before the 1940s post-war period. However, she goes on to point out that through the efforts of a critical report by the Moyne commission which highlighted the poor status of education in the entire Caribbean, financial assistance was given to several islands. Thus the decade between 1947 and 1957 saw Antigua gain an additional seven schools, one of which was the first government secondary school. This was opened in 1955. Between the period 1971 to 1976 five more secondary schools were built.

It should be noted that while there were few new educational institutions after 1976, there were several initiatives which served to expand and strengthen the education system. Chief among these was the passing of the Board of Education Act in 1994. This had the effect of creating a revenue stream specifically for funding education in Antigua and Barbuda. While Central Government continues to pay the salaries of government teachers, the Board of Education provides textbooks for students, facilitates repairs to school plants and provides bursaries to fund tertiary education.

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda also obtained a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank in the 1990s. With this loan, most of the Government Secondary Schools underwent substantial physical expansion, and several principals and officers in Ministry of Education Headquarters were given the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications. The loan is being repaid out of funds generated by the Education Levy.

In a bid to provide technical and vocational education and training to students drawn from the post-primary sections of many government schools in and around St. John's the National Technical Training Centre was built and completed in 1994. In 1997 an evening programme was initiated at the NTTC in 1997 to provide continuing education and training to persons who had already left school. From all accounts, the programme is vibrant and healthy. The building which now houses the Saint Mary's School of

Excellence was completed around 1988 with USAID funding. However, its commissioning as an educational institution was delayed for several years because of rivalry between two parliamentary representatives from neighbouring constituencies within the then ruling ALP administration, with one representative wanting the Jennings Secondary School to be the only secondary school in the south of the island, while the other representative wanted the newly constructed facility, which he called Valley High, to be used as a secondary school. There are some records in the Ministry of Education which reflect this “shilly-shallying” and “to-ing and fro-ing” as the Cabinet vacillated between the opposing interests. The programme at Saint Mary’s School of Excellence finally began in 2003 and caters for students of secondary age.

In 1997 the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Information Technology (ABIIT), a government-owned fee paying tertiary institution, was started with the focus on Information Technology.

The education system, as pointed out by Joseph and Payne (1988), has remained essentially an academic elitist one. It consists of both free public and fee-paying private schools. It is composed of four basic levels of formal education: early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary. Early childhood education is optional and is provided privately for children between the ages of three and six years old.

Schooling was made compulsory between the ages of five and sixteen years old, with a provision for students to remain until the age of twenty, by the Education Act of 1973. Children typically attend a private or government run primary school between the ages of five and twelve years old, the government school being free.

Transition to government secondary school is by having successfully passed the state administered common entrance examination. The top one hundred candidates are given the opportunity to progress to the school of their choice. The Antigua Grammar School and the Antigua Girls High School are usually the preferred choices. Those who have not been successful at the common entrance exam progress to ‘post-primary’ or what is now called the ‘junior secondary’ level. After three years they have the opportunity to sit an examination which allows them to progress to the secondary level, joining in the third

form. If they are unsuccessful they are allowed one more attempt at the post-primary/junior secondary examination; failure at this attempt will see them having to continue the rest of their education in post-primary/junior secondary school until the age of sixteen. Students may alternatively opt to go to a private secondary school by sitting the school's own private entrance examination.

Within the secondary schools, whether public or private, students are prepared to sit subjects at the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) level, equivalent to the UK GCSEs.

As noted by Dyde (2000), the only post-compulsory education and training available on the island up to 1972 was at the Leeward Island Teacher Training College at Goldengrove. However, in 1972 the Goldengrove Technical Institute was opened on the same site as the teacher training college. These later merged in 1977 to form the Antigua State College. A year later all the sixth forms in the secondary schools were transferred to the college, to form the A level Department. Another department, the Department of Undergraduate Studies, was also added in 1988, under an arrangement with the University of the West Indies (UWI) which allowed the college to offer first year UWI programmes in the Arts, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. This arrangement was further expanded in 1998 to allow second year programmes to be offered.

1.5 The economic context

As vocational education prepares people for the world of work, one of the important things to examine when researching how young perceive vocational education is the relationship between employment and education.

Using data from the Labour Force Survey, the Labour Market Review 2006 points out that the early 1970s were characterised by relatively low unemployment, amounting to approximately 1 million jobless persons in the UK (about 4 percent of workers aged 16 or over) (National Statistics, 2006). As shown in Figure 1.2, there was a modest increase in unemployment in 1975-76 as a result of the downswing in the economy. The rate remained between 5 and 6 percent until 1980, when it climbed rapidly, peaking at just under 12 per cent in 1984. In the

Late 1980s a recovery in the economy reduced unemployment to 7 percent until the early 1990s, when another recession raised it above 10 percent. The review goes on to note that, since its peak in 1993, unemployment has decreased steadily to 4.7 percent in the 3 months to September 2004. However, unemployment figures are higher for the young. In 1999, the SEU noted that 26% of the 16-18 age group were not in education or training, and 9% were also not employed.

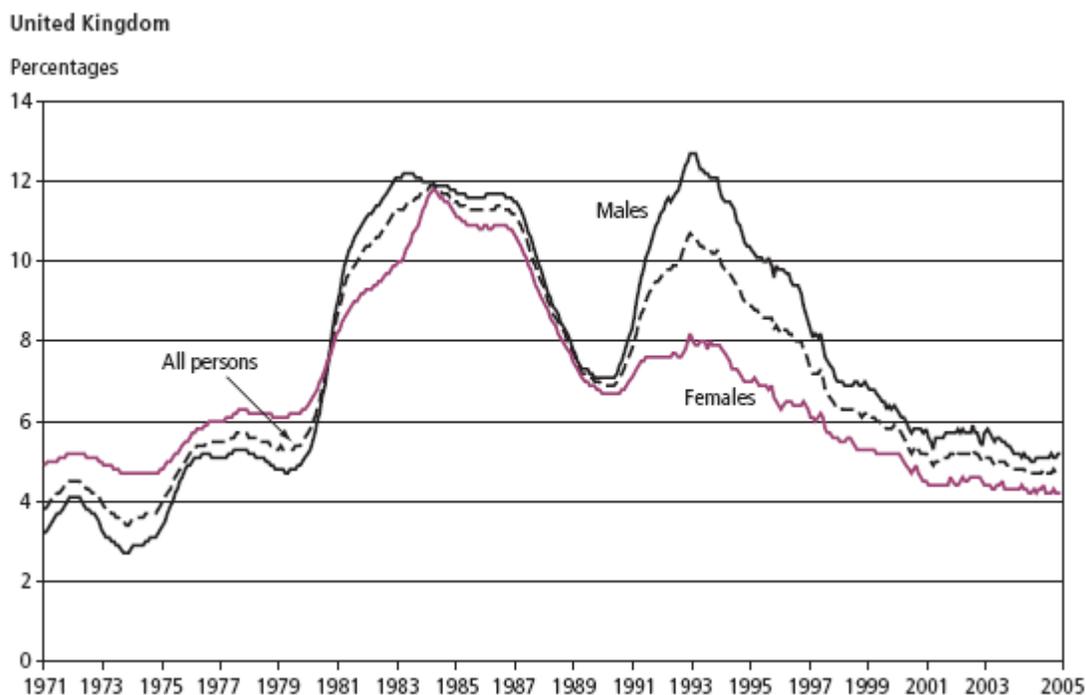


Figure 1.2 Unemployment rates by gender,¹ January-March 1971 to July-September 2005²

1 All aged 16 and over.

2 Seasonally adjusted

Source: National Statistics (2006, p.30)

The UK part of this study was carried out in schools and colleges in West Yorkshire, in the north of England. According to The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (Crowther, 2005), West Yorkshire has slightly less than half (42%) of the Yorkshire and Humber region's population, of whom 11% are from minority backgrounds. It notes that despite overall reductions in numbers employed in the industry, manufacturing remains a significant employing sector. Data from the Labour Force Survey shows that the overall levels of economic activity of those of working age across West Yorkshire in 2002-2004 were 87%, with female rates considerably lower than males. Using the claimant count rate

(Figure 1.3) they show that unemployment in West Yorkshire is running a fraction higher than in Great Britain as a whole.

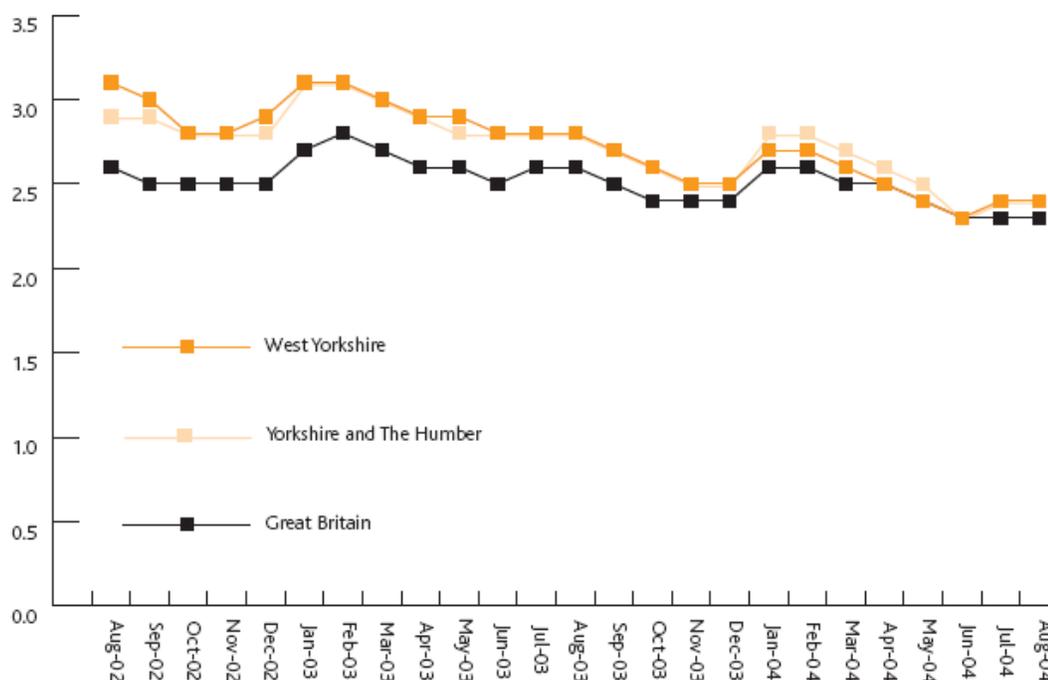


Figure 1.3 Claimant Count Rate in West Yorkshire, Yorkshire and The Humber and Great Britain, August 2002-2004
Source: Crowther (2005, p. 13)

However, while noting that unemployment rates vary among different sub-groups of the population in terms of gender, age, disability status, ethnic origin, qualification levels and previous occupation, the Labour Market Review 2006 points out that ‘unemployment rates for young people have been consistently higher than for those in older age groups. More importantly, they have not followed the downward trend. This is shown in Figure 1.4.

However, of particular interest to this study, the Labour Market Review also points out that young people account for an increasing proportion of the unemployed total, and that people with no qualifications are more likely to be unemployed than those with qualifications, particularly if the qualifications are at higher levels of educational attainment. This suggests that, in West Yorkshire at least, compared to the 1970s, employment for young people is much harder to come by.

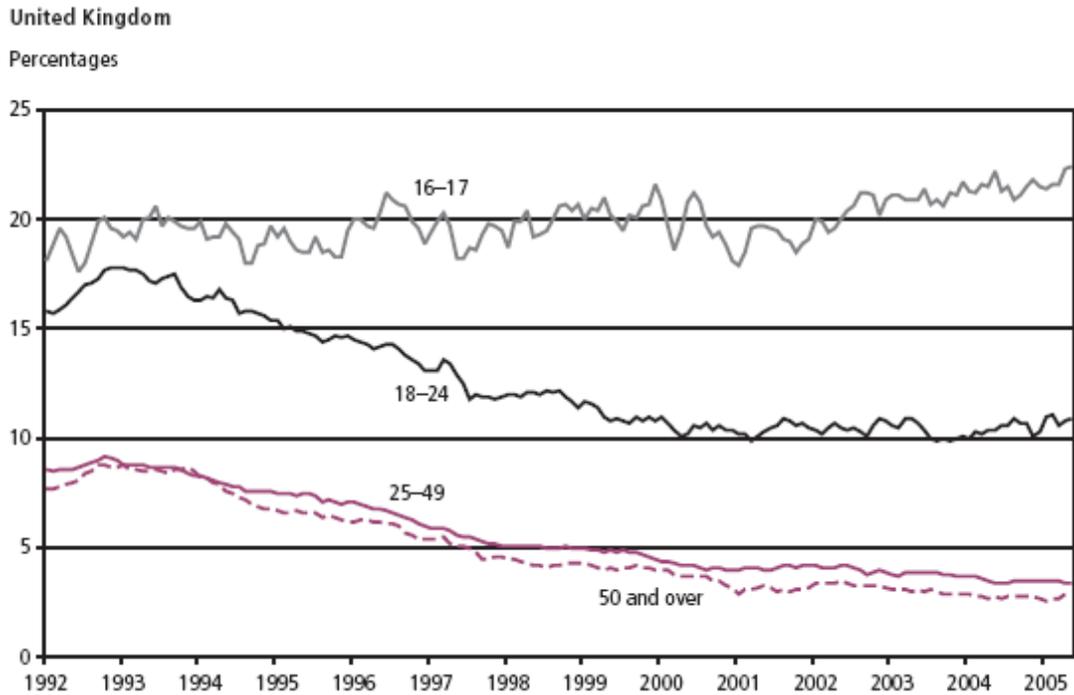


Figure 1.4 Unemployment rates: by age group, March-May 1992 to July-September 2005¹

¹ Seasonally adjusted

Source: National Statistics (2006, p. 32)

For young people, gaining employment may be further complicated by factors that Wellington (1993) describes. As he points out, the methods by which employers recruit employees is not as simple as it may seem, for the skills that may be needed and the personnel that employers choose may not always match. He describes the findings of research carried out by Carter (1962), Jenkins (1986) and Wellington (1989) which ‘suggest that the needs of employers are not as straight forward as one may expect, and may not even be in the interest of their organization or the economy’ (p.86).

Paradoxically, this is still the case today. For, while their recruitment policies may state one thing, what is actually done may often be quite different. This has been highlighted by Ashton and Maguire (1980) who identified five differing strategies or methods which employers use to recruit employees. Thus, they suggest, it appears that success in school has no real meaning for those who aim to go into employment directly from school. It is those who will go into jobs or professions which require a relevant degree course who benefit most from gaining qualifications at school. If this is the case, it is worthy of further study.

1.6 The study

1.6.1 Methodology

As discussed at the beginning of this Chapter, this study examines young people's attitudes towards vocational education and careers in the UK and in Antigua, and seeks to explore the factors that influence them when making their subject and career choices. This study compares perceptions of aspects of the English vocational education and training system with that of a Caribbean version, more specifically, that of Antigua. Fisher (1999) notes that 'comparative studies of aspects of vocational education are not common' (p.74), but he cites some which have compared the British system with other international systems, such as Green (1990), Lewis (1994) and Hickox and Lyon (1998). However, although participants in this study came from both Antigua and the UK, and comparisons will be made between the two, it is not intended that this will be a full comparative study under the 'comparative education' discipline.

The three specific aims of the study are:

- To explore young peoples' employment aspirations in Antigua and the UK
- To investigate young people's attitudes towards jobs and careers
- To evaluate the various influences on their career choices.

An integrated survey approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods was utilised so as to obtain a rich texture of data to be interpreted (Dey 1993; Bell, 2005). The data collection methods took the form of self completed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The data drawn from each stage was used to formulate and develop questions for the next stage.

The study was conducted within two secondary schools and two colleges in the North of England and two secondary schools and a college in the Caribbean island of Antigua. In taking into account the sensitive and sometimes difficult nature of an outsider getting access to interview school children, the use of questionnaires was considered to be the most appropriate method to obtain information from the students within the school system. This also has the benefit of offering the protection of anonymity to its

respondents. Thus, questionnaires were administered to the year 10 and 11 students in each school in the UK and 4th and 5th form students in the Antiguan schools.

The second stage was conducted within the colleges, where the sample was taken from students on the level 1, 2 and 3 courses drawn from two distinctive subject areas -Business Studies, and Tourism and Leisure. The data collection on the second stage consisted of questionnaires similar to those used in the schools, but adapted for college students.

As Foddy (1993) points out:

Asking questions is widely accepted as a cost-efficient (and sometimes the only) way of gathering information about past behaviour and experiences, private actions and motives, and beliefs, values and attitudes (i.e. subjective variables that cannot be measured directly). (p. 1)

Thus the third stage of this study took the form of semi-structured interviews with young people in both the schools and colleges in the UK and Antigua to explore in more depth the questions raised by the study aims. The semi-structured type of interview has been chosen for its flexibility in adapting to the particular situation, thus allowing the interviewer to gather information which may not have been obtained by the standard questions on the interview schedule. It also allows for the interview sample to be asked a standard set of questions, which strengthens the validity of the study, but also for further prompting and probing to occur in order to seek a deeper understanding of what is being said.

Yates (2004) warns that, with respect to research, it is important to have a sense of what makes this contribution different from simply 'bumping into someone' and asking them the same questions. Therefore, while it is necessary to gather as much information as possible through asking questions, tact and care must be taken to ensure that the answers received are valid and reliable. Using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods will aid in this respect.

1.6.2 The structure of the thesis

This chapter contains the introduction to the study, the rationale and the study aims. It has provided some context to the study by offering a brief review of education and training in the two countries and by introducing key literature on themes that underpin the study.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature relating to the first two aims of the study, namely:

- To explore young peoples' employment aspirations in Antigua and the UK
- To investigate young people's attitudes towards jobs and careers

This includes an evaluation of current research on the perceptions of academic and vocational education, education and its contribution to the economy and skills for employment. It concludes by summarising the most important literature, to provide a theoretical framework for this part of the study.

Chapter Three provides a review of the literature relating to the third aim of the study, namely:

- To evaluate the various influences on young people's career choices.

This includes a discussion of the careers guidance system in the UK, and what is currently known about the ways in which young people make their career choices. Various models of choice decision making are explored. Literature on the various influences on young people in making their career choices is explored. The concluding section summarises the three main theories that relate to careers decision making, in order to provide a theoretical framework for the second part of the study.

Chapter Four provides the detail of the methodology used in the study. It describes the selection of the study participants, the research methods and the data collection and analysis.

Chapter Five is the first of the results chapters, presenting data relating to the study aims one and two. It describes the characteristics of the study population and their career

aspirations, and then goes on to explore participants' understanding of the terms academic and vocational and their perceptions of academic and vocational courses and careers.

Chapter Six, the second of the results chapters, presents the findings relating to study aim three. It explores the various factors that participants consider have influenced their course or career decisions, and applies a particular decision making model to the decision making processes observed in the study.

Chapter Seven summarises the overall findings of the study, relating these to the theoretical framework used. A new model for choice making is proposed, together with recommendations regarding the structure and implementation of careers advice to young people in the future. The extent to which the study has achieved its aims is also discussed, along with suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two

ACADEMIC OR VOCATIONAL: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the research literature on academic and vocational education with a view to establishing the theoretical framework within which the study will take place. It begins by examining the ‘academic/vocational’ divide and the perceptions held by various parties (governments, parents, children and young people) involved. It goes on to discuss the contribution of schooling to the economy, and the role played by vocational education in this. Aspects of skills development are explored, together with the notion of skills shortages. This chapter concludes with a summary of the emerging theoretical framework in relation to the literature reviewed.

2.2 Perceptions of academic and vocational education

Within the education system there is a dichotomy between what is known as ‘academic’ education and that known as ‘vocational’ education. For most people academic education is what is first thought of when the term education is mentioned. Vocational education on the other hand tends to be viewed as being for students who have little or no academic aptitude (Wolf, 2002).

According to UNESCO, vocational education and training is the form of education which prepares the individual for gainful employment:

TVET is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work... These include: Apprenticeship Training, Vocational Education, Technical Education, Technical-Vocational Education (TVE), Occupational Education (OE), Vocational Education and Training (VET), Career and Technical Education (CTE), Workforce Education (WE), Workplace Education (WE) etc.

(UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006)

Cockett (1996) points out that vocational education has been aimed at low achieving students in school as an alternative to the ‘mainstream’ curriculum. It is a phenomenon which views academic subjects and careers as being superior to vocational subjects

and careers. Thus academic education is appropriate for the brighter students, while vocational is the alternative for the less able (Edwards, 1997).

It is often argued that Vocational Education is viewed as a second best option. Wolf (2002) agrees that vocational courses are viewed as being for students who have little or no academic aptitude. She notes that it:

'instead refers to courses for young people which are offered as a lower-prestige alternative to academic secondary schooling, and which lead to manual, craft and, more recently secretarial jobs. 'Technical' education slots into the hierarchy above vocational and below academic, and leads, in theory, to the technician jobs which increased in number during the twentieth century.

(Wolf, 2002, p.58)

Lumby and Foskett (2005) suggest that some of the perceived divide may be due to mass education being developed at the same time as the arrival of the industrial revolution when the division of labour was prevalent. Winch (2000) states that during mediaeval and early modern times, artisans carried out and controlled most of the processes in the production of goods. Each artisan had a number of skills and thus were major players in the conception and production of the products.

However, as the capitalist mode of production developed, the growth of factory production gradually decreased the number of production processes with which the artisan was involved, until he or she was only responsible for a particular individual process involving one particular skill. This approach to production embodies the notion of specialisation which allowed workers to acquire ability and accuracy, thus increasing output and ultimately profit (Winch, 2000).

With the invention of machinery and the Taylorist production line, work was reduced to a 'simple repetitive process requiring little or no skill' (Winch, 2000, p.85).

Preparation for work was therefore viewed as 'training for a few simple operations' (Winch, 2000, p.86). Such a move towards job fragmentation served to reduce greatly the need for proficient craftsmen as well as the time needed to become proficient at a skill. This produced a negative effect on education, as on the one hand education was seen by the masses to have little to do with developing skills which would get them a job, and on the other liberal educators saw training for the workplace as being 'mindless forms of activity' (Winch, 2000, p.86).

Winch (2000) also supports this argument that it is historical developments of manufacturing which have led to misunderstandings of the value of training and work. He points out that one of the common misconceptions in Britain and other English speaking countries is the grouping together of work-based teaching and learning with training. This has resulted in the predominant view of academic education as relating to 'learning with the mind' as opposed to vocational education which is seen as relating to 'learning with the hands. Or to put it another way, while academic education has to do with intellectual work and/or ability, vocational education deals with manual work and/or ability (Lumby and Foskett, 2005).

While noting that there has been 'a long running debate as to how far education should be vocational', Peel (1998, p.7) points out that British educational culture has tended to 'guide the brightest pupils into academic, non-vocational studies'. So much so that 'many of the older, established universities regarded vocational studies as inferior'. He however suggests that the balance has shifted since the 1990s when the polytechnics were awarded university status.

Bathmaker and Avis (2007) however, maintain that, within the English system, courses and qualifications are still unequally positioned 'and have served to prepare young people to know their place as they make the transition to adulthood' (p.515). There is a long history of such observations. For example, Green (1991) pointed out that even though vocational education was being taught in colleges as well as in the workplace, little had changed in terms of outlook towards the provision:

The development of technical education in this century has, despite the arrival of the technical college, largely failed to break out of this mould. The basis of technical training has continued to be the industry based apprenticeship system, and the college and, to an extent, the polytechnic have only been an extension of this. Post-school technical education has continued to be normatively part-time, exceptionally narrow and 'practical' in its emphases, and almost entirely marginalised from mainstream general education.

(Green 1991, p.23)

Green discusses the role of the City and Guilds qualification system, by noting its lack of unification with the 'academic' General Certificate of Education (GCE) qualifications:

The continued dominance of City and Guilds qualification system, which has no connections with General Certificate of Education (GCE) qualifications and has provided no routes into higher education, has maintained the segregation of technical from academic education, and has continued to underline the lower status that has traditionally been accorded to technical as against academic knowledge.

(ibid, p.23)

Green goes on to note that there have been attempts to address this, with little success:

Symptomatically, when attempts have been made to break this mould and to introduce full-time technical education, as in the case of the technical secondary schools in the 1940s, the project has been stillborn. The technical schools never gained 'parity of prestige' and were consequently not popular.

(ibid, p.24)

In an attempt to combat young people's reluctance to enter vocational areas many initiatives have over the years been tried to encourage young people to take up the vocational route. Felstead *et al* (2000, p.709) describe these as a 'bewildering amount of change'. Green (1991) suggests they have made little difference:

The development of youth training programmes in the 1970s has been the only other concerted effort to improve technical education since the war, but they have done little more than reproduce all the old problems.

(ibid, p.24)

Thus:

Youth training has thus not been taken on with much enthusiasm by employers.

(ibid, p.24)

Hodkinson (1995) suggests that all the courses, training schemes or jobs on offer are irrelevant if young people do not perceive them as being suitable. Green (1991) points out that the various training programmes, rather than promoting vocational education and training, actually reinforced the worse stereotypes and thus did nothing to counter the perception of low status provision. As Green points out:

The reason for this is that the schemes have never attempted to provide a proper technical education, even up to craft level. They have been much more concerned with inculcating work discipline, lowering wage expectations and providing a social skills training instrumentally designed to control social attitudes.

(Green 1991, p.24)

Even when vocational qualifications are designed explicitly to have parity with academic ones, as in the case of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), introduced into the UK in the 1990s, there remains a difference in perception. For example, Unwin and Wellington (2001) explain that the consensus they gathered from the apprentices they interviewed regarding the value of GNVQs compared to A Levels was that ‘GNVQs were regarded as being at a lower level to A Levels and were therefore not worth considering’ (p.41). Despite the revision of GNVQs to become ‘Advanced Vocational Qualifications’ (AVCs), the problem remained:

The problem of the academic/vocational divide and the low status of vocational qualifications in comparison with their academic counterparts in the English education and training system is well known and commonly recognised. One of the major aims of the Curriculum2000 reforms was to create a ‘parity of esteem’ between the A Level and the AVCE – hence the effort to make the AVCE into a ‘vocational’ A Level.

(Savory *et al*, 2003, p.14)

The divisions extend to higher education. For example, before 1992 the UK had a two tier higher education system, with polytechnics and universities. Pratt (1997) noted that many students had applied to the polytechnics as a second best option at the time. Although all are now called universities, the distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ universities still exists to some extent.

Likewise, in a Caribbean context, vocational education must be examined in terms of the history of the region itself, as atavistic associations may be the root cause of individuals not wishing to enter vocational courses. The region was subjected to some 400 years of slavery where slaves were transported from West Africa across the Atlantic to the Caribbean Islands packed into ships. After this wretched journey they were forced to do manual labour in the fields for long hours. This is certainly one possibility why society has this low regard for vocational work:

The memories of chattel slavery have stamped upon the British West Indian intelligentsia a strong aversion to and contempt for manual labour. This has coloured the conception of vocational education.

(Williams, 1994, p.45)

Academic education, on the other hand, has always been linked to white collar jobs and the legacy of the colonial education and training system that was introduced to the islands in the 17th century has done little to change this view. People generally view

vocational education as sub-standard and ‘not good enough’ for their children. Similarly, the fact that technical education in the Leeward Islands was started ‘as an adjunct of the juvenile penal system’ (Fergus 2003, p.152) would have placed an early stigma on that form of education. In respect to Antigua in particular Fergus notes:

The first schools were established in Antigua at Skerrett’s and Scott’s Hill for boys and girls and were linked with farms.
(Fergus, 2003, p.152)

Today the reform school for boys is still colloquially referred to as Skerrett, but no longer has any links with farming:

Consistent with their British Colonial heritage, Commonwealth Caribbean countries have tended at core to be overwhelmingly partial to grammar-school type education and to be correspondingly averse to technical education. This attitude had its genesis in the period of slavery when the only formal education available was for the children of settlers (the planter class).
(Lewis and Lewis, 1985, p.159)

A possible contributing factor to the perceived academic vocational divide is a lack of understanding of what the term ‘vocational’ actually means. For example, Davies and Biesta (2007), in presenting the results from a study by the Transforming Learning Culture, note that even though the 14-16 year old students whom they interviewed were ‘taking a course in administration/information technology in their local further education college’ when asked what their understanding was of the term vocational, they received responses such as:

I think it means going to college. Does it mean sort of part time?
(Davies and Biesta, 2007, p.23)

Another perception relates to the job market and potential earnings. As Robinson (1997) points out, the understanding that they might earn less if following a vocational route may act as a detractor:

There is no parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications in the labour market. On average men and women working full-time with academic qualifications at one level in the national qualifications framework earn about the same as men and women with vocational qualifications set notionally one level higher.
(Robinson, 1997 p.36)

Robinson goes on to note:

The labour market provides clear signals which explain why young people with the best GCSE scores at age 16 tend to opt for the academic A level route rather than the vocational route. To do so is rational because it is likely to get them a better job.

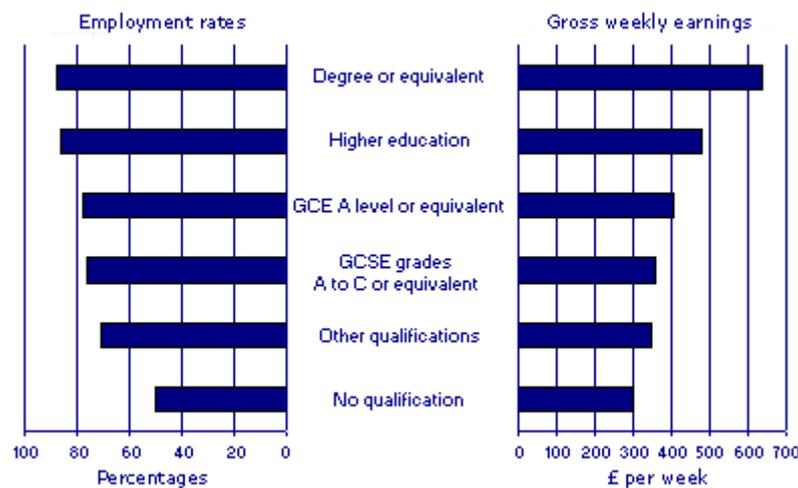
(ibid, p.37)

Parental influence is another factor. For example, as stated in the Caricom Survey of Technical and Vocational Education and Training:

Parents will pressure educators or their children to do academic subjects in spite of aptitude and students will opt out of vocational subjects such as agriculture due to perceived status problems.

(Cropper, 1988, p.123)

This may be due to the fact that, in accordance with the perceptions above, the more education that is acquired the more an individual is likely to earn. This is illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.



1 Males aged 16 to 64, females aged 16 to 59. Full-time employees only based upon respondents self assessment. Respondents who did not report an hourly wage or who reported hourly pay greater than £100 are excluded.

2 Excludes those who did not know their highest qualification level.

Figure 2.1 Employment rate and gross weekly earnings by highest qualification, Spring 2003 (National Statistics, 2004)

Worth (2002) states that ‘research into how a changing labour market affects young people’s attitudes is rather scarce’ (p.166). However, pointing to a Canadian study (Lowe and Krahn, 2000), he does note that:

The most significant changes found were in terms of an increased concern with working hard in education in order to secure rewarding work sustaining the idea that education is the key to labour success.
(Worth, 2002, p.166)

But while level of education is an important factor, it is not the only one. There are other issues such as the type of career chosen, where one lives, the background from which one comes, the school and/or university attended, the amount of support and the guidance provided to the individual (Wolf, 2002). Hansen and Vignoles (2005) agree, having noted that when one observes the increases in house prices in a specific area, the quality of schooling in that area also improves. This poses a difficulty for those who come from lower income families as it raises questions about the quality of schooling available to them.

Davies and Biesta (2007) however, suggest that vocational learning may not always be the ‘soft’ option, in that:

...while pre-16 students appreciate gaining real work skills, the value of their vocational learning stems from a complex interrelationship between a number of factors, rather than from a narrowly vocational focus.

(p.37)

They however go on to highlight the caution in the Tomlinson Report (DfES, 2004) about not letting young people specialise too early, as many are known to be undecided and may wish to change direction during their later school career. This has important implications for the career choices that young people make, and what stage in their school career these have to be made. This will be explored further in Chapter Three.

2.3 Education and its contribution to the economy

...the quality of a nation’s education and training system is seen to hold the key to future economic prosperity.

(Brown and Lauder, 1996, p.1)

It is generally agreed that if a democratic country is to become financially stable and progressive, then it must educate its people. By passing on and spreading, for example, skills, knowledge and inventions, vocational education allows the natural and human resources of a country to be exploited. On the one hand, by training the workforce to exploit the natural resources, individuals can earn a living while at the same time benefiting the economy. For example, in a country like Jamaica, the mining

of raw materials such as bauxite and the production of wood can contribute to the economy of the country. The wood is used to make lumber for the building trade, thus saving the country millions of dollars in imports; and bauxite is exported as alumina for the extraction of aluminium. In both these cases not only can individuals earn a living but the economy also benefits.

Alternatively, in Antigua where there are few material resources, the country spends millions of dollars on imports and thus relies on the service trades (tourism being the main economy) to generate income. It can be seen therefore that in order for a democratic country to survive and prosper, some type of a balanced education and training system must be in operation.

There have been many widespread debates regarding education and its contribution to the economy and the quotation above by Brown and Lauder epitomises the political rhetoric used by many policy makers around the world. Many suggest that such claims are, however, lacking in empirical evidence (e.g. Wilkinson, 1983; Pritchett, 1996). Wilkinson (1983), for example, notes that such dogmatic arguments ‘are not based on a careful examination of how economies actually work’ but rather have developed on ‘a priori reasoning about how they should operate’ (p.413).

The idea of education as a vehicle for competitiveness and productivity has not been ‘confined to a few especially successful countries’ (Ashton and Green, 1996, p.1) but has also been a concern for developing countries (Ashton and Green, 1996; Wolf 2002). Such belief is evident in the policy documents and statements of government officials from various countries. For example in Antigua, the progress report for the ‘Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education Project’ states:

In order to survive globalization and international trade liberalization, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda realises that it must place emphasis on education and training, in its effort to enhance the quality of its human resources.

(Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Education, 2005, p.2)

Similarly in the UK the Education and Skills Committee Report Summary states:

Beginning with the discussion document Success for All in November 2002, one of the recurrent themes of the Government's education policy has been the need to improve skills levels in the workforce in order to enable people to perform more highly skilled jobs and to help improve productivity throughout the economy.

(DfES, 2005, p.3)

These concerns among world governments can be said to have been aroused by continual changes in the global economic market which have resulted in the phenomenon commonly referred to as globalisation. The advent of regional communities and markets such as the European Union and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy have caused a certain amount of fear among nationals that others will come into their countries and take up the available jobs and services. However, while some may see the effects of globalisation as being at the expense of jobs and services within their country, it should also be pointed out that globalisation widens markets for job seekers of these same countries and helps to fill voids in skill shortages.

In Britain, it has been suggested over the years that a lack of skills in the workforce is the root cause of the declining British industrial base and economy. Thus policy makers argue that the solution to the problem is that individuals should become better qualified (whether academically or vocationally); the more qualified one is the more likely they are to be employed. In addition, their income will be higher. As Wolf (2002) notes:

For over a quarter of a century, British governments have been making determined attempts to enlarge, redesign and promote vocational education. They have been convinced that this is necessary if the economy is to reach the apotheosis of a 'high skills' equilibrium, as well as being in the best interest of the nation's young.

(p.56)

Similarly, smaller countries such as Antigua see themselves as being vulnerable and unable to compete with the more developed countries if they too do not improve the skills of their workforce. Thus one of the biggest responses to globalisation and global markets in both developed and developing countries is to boost the education of people and thereby enhance the human resource. However, it would be fallacious to put all the weight on education as there are a number of other factors and variables such as employment and unemployment rates, health, life expectancy, the abundance of natural resources and the extent of political stability which affect the economy.

According to Wolf (2002), British politicians have an obsession with education and its relevance or relationship to the country's economy. This has been to such an extent that Hillman (1996) states that for 150 years British policy makers have been concerned about deficiencies in education and training. Two such examples are Sir Lyon Playfair's comments in 1855 in relation to the necessity of science education and Prime Minister James Callaghan's 1976 speech at Ruskin College which came to be known as the Great Debate. More recently sentiments relating to the importance of the education system to the economy have been reaffirmed in government policy documents (DTI, 1994; DTI, 1995; NSTF and DfEE, 2000b; PIU, 2001). As noted before, this view of linking education to the state of the country's economy is not restricted to Britain but rather is a global view. This is highlighted by Wolf who notes that:

Education is a big player in the economy and labour market of any country you care to think of, and almost unimaginably enormous worldwide.

(Wolf, 2002, p.1)

However, while it has been noted that the UK is just as effective at developing highly skilled graduates as their competitors (DfES, 2003a), workers' overall contribution to productivity remains a serious weakness (Leitch, 2005). For example, statistics show that workers in France, Germany and the US produce between a quarter and a third more in every hour they work than their British counterparts (DfES, 2003a, p.18). The question then is why is productivity so poor in a country with such a capacity for producing highly skilled graduates?

While many (such as Brown, 2001) agree that global economic competitiveness rests on the knowledge and skills of the workplace, Mullan (2004) does not agree that education and training make such a fundamental contribution to the economy. He argues that:

Over the past decade it has become an article of faith that education and skills make a vital contribution to economic performance

(Mullan , 2004, online)

Mullan acknowledges the fact that countries which have expanded their education provision since the 1960s have experienced faster economic growth, but he goes on to

suggest that the education system frequently takes the blame for poor investment in the economy:

Deficiencies in national labour productivity and economic growth are increasingly attributed not to inadequacies in productive investment, but to educational shortfalls and weak labour skills

(Mullan, 2004, online)

Grugulis and Stoyanova (2006, p.1) suggest that ‘the motivation behind skills development in the last decade has been strongly influenced by the belief that it contributes to performance’. Those most skilled are expected to be the most competitive and enjoy the highest standards of living. However, as they go on to point out, the complexity of measuring skill and the diversity with which performance is defined makes it difficult to establish such a link. It has been noted by Keep *et al* (2002) that the way in which many studies attribute such links is through the use of indicators or proxies such as individual wage gains. However, such crude methods of measuring skill using the general proxies of years of schooling, wage levels, formal qualifications, occupations and courses and more formalised types of training are problematic in themselves as indicators (Keep *et al*, 2002, p.11). If, for example, years of schooling are used as a measure, these do not tell us anything about the quality of the education experienced.

Most, however, agree that vocational education is concerned with the acquisition of the knowledge and skills which are essential for the world of work and, as Felstead *et al* (2000) state:

... the notion that the skills and knowledge of the workforce is a – if not the – key determinant of competitiveness has remained an enduring feature of the debate.

(p.709).

As the labour market changes, so will the type and content of the vocational education needed. As e-skills UK states:

Our world is changing. We all need more skills than ever before. For individuals, two out of three jobs in the future will require a higher level of skills and better qualifications. In fact, in less than ten years there will be very few unskilled jobs.

(e-skills UK, 2007, online)

e-skills UK goes on to point out that at present:

... thousands of employers – of all sizes – admit that their staff don't have the right skills needed for the future.

(op. cit)

They suggest that individuals should take responsibility for their own skill development:

But we're all natural learners – so use this site and the links to services available from our partners in Further Education to explore how skills can help you take control of your future.

(op. cit)

Over the past two decades there has been an emphasis in policy documents referring to education as the key to increased productivity and competitiveness (eg. DES, 1986; DfEE, 1997; DfEE, 1998). This political rhetoric that education is the key to economic success has therefore placed considerable pressure on educators to raise the performance levels of young people. This began with the Thatcher Government's Technical Vocational Education Initiatives (TVEI) and continues to the present day with the newly announced Specialist Diploma of the Labour Government. For example, Prime Minister Tony Blair in a Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) foreword states:

“The best defence against social exclusion is having a job, and the best way to get a job is to have a good education, with the right training and experience”.

(SEU 1999, p. 6)

The Nuffield review (2003) notes:

There is a growing recognition of the importance of the education that takes place between the ages of 14 and 19 because these are the years when young people make the lengthening transition between compulsory education and the world of work and higher education. At the same time, education practitioners and policymakers in the UK have a real concern that too many young people do not positively participate in this phase of education.

(p.9)

The Education and Skills Committee report summary adds:

Beginning with the discussion document Success for All in November 2002, one of the recurrent themes of the Government's education policy has been the need to improve skills levels in the workforce in order to enable people to perform more highly skilled jobs and to help improve productivity through out the economy.

(DfES, 2005, p. 3)

In 2003 the UK government implemented a national skills strategy. This strategy is outlined in the document 'Skills Strategy 21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential'. This document notes that skills are linked to sustaining a competitive, productive economy.

2.4 Skills for employment

The immediate need of the nation is a large supply of skilled workmen, of men with inventive genius and of employers alert in the development of new ideas.

(Whitehead, 1950)

Defining what employers mean by the term 'skill' is complex (Gallie, 1988) as what employers mean by skill, and the skills needed, are subject to change (Keep and Mayhew, 1999; Payne, 1999; Payne, 2000; Keep *et al* 2002). In the past 'skill' referred to a skilled craft worker's technical knowledge, practical abilities or competences, spatial awareness, or a combination of these (Keep and Mayhew 1999; Payne 1999; Payne 2000; Keep *et al* 2002). Today as Payne (2000) notes:

... 'skill' has expanded almost exponentially to include a veritable galaxy of 'soft', 'generic', 'transferable', 'social', and 'interactional' skills, frequently indistinguishable from personal characteristics, behaviour and attitudes, which in the past would rarely have been conceived of as skills.

(p.354)

Payne (1999) credits this change to three main factors:

- *the shift from the traditional manufacturing industry to a service based industry which requires more customer interaction*
- *'the emergence of a new and often ideologically-driven paradigm of organisational restructuring' which sees the key drivers of competitive advantage in high value added global markets as being multi-skilling, problem solving, team working, knowledge and team working*
- *the increasing emphasis of policy makers since the 1970s of the 'the employability' of young entrants to the labour market and the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed to be 'adaptable' in the face of a highly uncertain and rapidly changing labour market'*

(Payne,1999, p.1)

As discussed in Section 2.2, vocational education and training has been and still is viewed as being a low status provision for those not academically inclined. Negative connotations, due to the stigmatisation of early vocational schools (the reform schools in Antigua), have led to this ever present view of the provision.

Therefore technical and vocational education has not always received the attention it deserves, being seen as the ‘Cinderella’ of educational provision (Fell, 1974; Lea, 2002). Green (1991) agrees:

Lastly, perhaps most serious, ... Technical education remained dependent instead on the empirical and rule of thumb methods of the workshop and the apprenticeship, ... with the consequence that technical education remained normatively part-time, anti theoretical, low status and entirely marginalised from mainstream education.

(Green 1991, p.11)

Green (1991) suggests that historically, technical education has not received the attention it deserves. He suggests that this is due to the early industrialisation of Britain, which he says, has negatively affected educational development. He states:

Technical education and training have remained markedly underdeveloped and undervalued.

(Green 1991, p.14)

Green goes on to point out that employer investment in training in the UK has always been low, and this was exacerbated in the 1980s when the industrial training boards were disbanded by the Conservative government. Farley (1985) agrees, suggesting that by focusing efforts on those who remain in full-time education, and subsequently enter higher education to take academic degree courses, Britain’s education system has neglected the majority of its young people through the 20th century. Farley notes that while there has been some part-time provision for those in apprenticeships, the vast majority of school leavers have received no structured preparation for adult life.

This is despite the fact that, since the 1970s, Education in the UK has been used as a catalyst to reduce unemployment, in particular youth unemployment (Field, 2001). This has brought with it a number of ‘education to work initiatives’. At the same period in Antigua (being under Statehood at the time) and some of the other Caribbean islands, vocational institutions were being constructed.

It has been noted that in the UK, until the latter part of the 1970, staying on in school was not popular with young people. Many left school at the earliest opportunity, due to the ease with which they were able to find employment. However, this led to many young people having few if any formal qualifications as well as poor basic literacy and numeracy skills (Keep and Mayhew, 1999, p.2). According to Cregan (2001), the trend of leaving school at 16 changed from the late 1970s to the early/mid-1980s until

there were fewer than 10 per cent of 16 year olds in full-time employment and about 80 per cent in full-time education. As shown in Figure 2.2, the DCSF (2007a) reports that in 2006 the proportion of 16 year olds in full time education had risen to 89.7 per cent, 17 year olds to 81.5 per cent while that for 18 year olds has been constant at about 61 per cent.

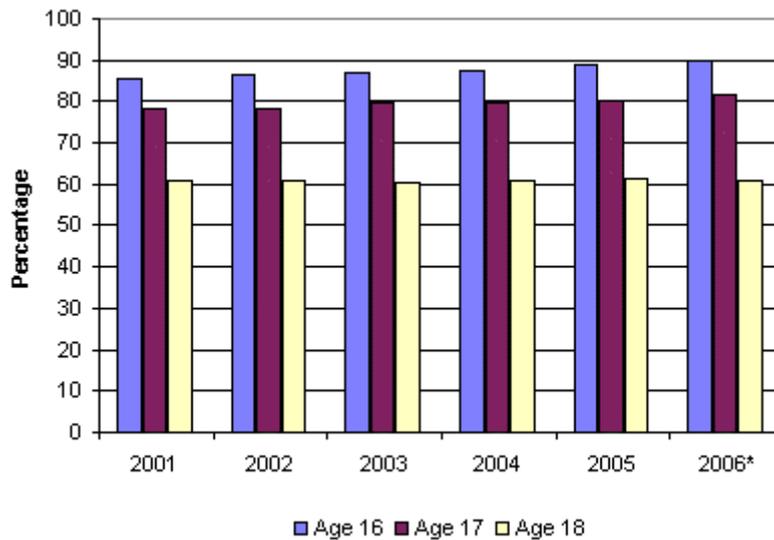


Figure 2.2 Participation of 16 to 18 year olds in education and training, England, 2001 to 2006. (DCSF, 2007)

Cregan (2001) thus contends that staying on in schools has ‘acted as a direct substitute for unemployment for those who preferred to have work but could not find a job’ (p.127). It should however be noted that the balance has not shifted from academic study, as Figure 2.3 shows.

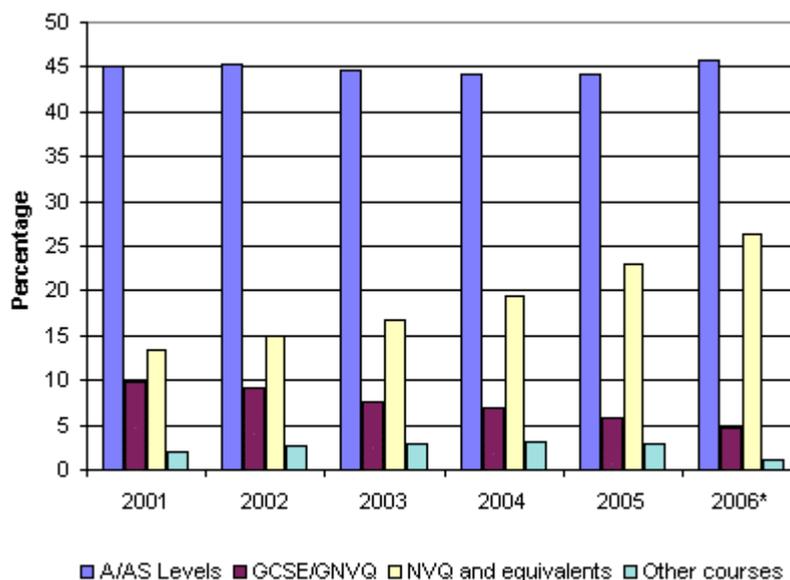


Figure 2.3 Percentage of 16 year olds in full-time education by type of course, England, 2001 to 2006. (DCSF, 2007)

The economic recession of the 1970s had led to a steep rise in youth unemployment (Unwin and Wellington, 2001). In response to this crisis the Thatcher government introduced a number of training schemes. Together with removing the right for 16 and 17 year olds to claim social security (Unwin and Wellington, 2001) this resulted in an increase in the number of young people continuing education until the age of 18.

The government training initiatives were intended to be ‘certified by testing and qualifications’. The various schemes eventually resulted in the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) ranging from level 1 to level 5. GNVQs were later added to provide a vocational equivalent to A levels. To further enhance the vocational aspect of education, there was also the introduction of work placements for all students during their GCSE year.

However, there was still a concern that young people entering employment lacked the necessary workplace or ‘employability’ skills. Therefore, in 1983, in an effort to bolster these, Core Skills were introduced as part of the YTS training scheme curriculum (Unwin and Wellington, 2001). According to Wolf (2002), the notion of core skills was first highlighted by Kenneth Baker in 1989 during a speech to the annual general meeting of the Association of Colleges of Further and Higher Education (ACFHE). In this speech he noted that there were a number of skills which would be needed by both young people and adults in the future. This was then followed a few months later by the CBI Task Force report, *Towards a Skill Revolution*, in which the core skills were promoted. Core skills were incorporated into the NVQ curricula by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). The core skills adopted were:

- Application of number
- Information technology
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Working with others
- Improving one’s own learning and performance

These were later to also form part of the GNVQ qualification. However, on the recommendations of the Dearing Review of qualifications for 16-19 year olds they were renamed Key Skills and became part of all academic and vocational syllabuses.

In addition, number, communication and information technology formed a new AS level in key skills. According to the National Skills Task Force (2000) these six key skills, along with ‘additional skills and attributes’ are continued to be sought after by employers.

According to Wolf (2002, p.117) ‘the history of the introduction of core or key skills encapsulates the growing and unusual influence on UK education that business enjoyed during the 1980s and 1990s’. During this period business and industry had a rather negative view of the education system. In their view the schools were producing pupils who lacked the ‘relevant skills or personal qualities’. Wolf notes:

They can't add up; they can't write business letters, they don't know how to work in teams, or talk to customers or understand the need to turn up on time...

(ibid, p.117)

2.5 The ‘skills gap’

Finegold and Soskice (1988) put forward the notion of ‘low skills/low quality’, which, according to Keep and Mayhew (1999):

...marked a new stage in the debate about the role that skills and knowledge might play in competitiveness and organizational performance within advanced economies.

(p.1)

The UK government commissioned the Leitch Review in 2004 to determine what the UK’s optimal skills mix needs to be if it is to maximize its economic growth, productivity and social justice by 2020. Leitch (2006) notes that although ‘the UK’s skills base has suffered from historic deficits built up over a long period of time’, it has ‘improved significantly over recent years as reforms have begun to succeed in driving improvements’. However, as shown in Figure 2.4, it is still weak in comparison to international standards and, since skills are said to be the key to competitiveness, he notes that this will retard productivity, growth and social justice. He further states that, even if the current skills targets are met, the UK will still lag behind many of its comparators by 2020.

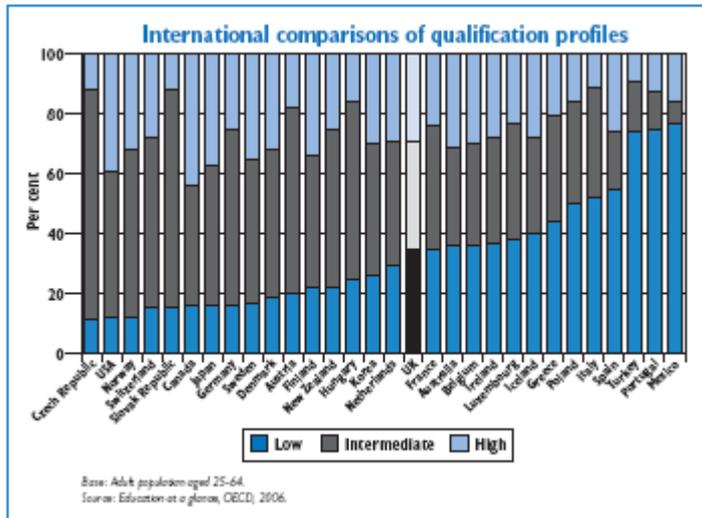


Figure 2.4 Comparisons of international qualification profiles
Leitch (2006, p. 40)

The Leitch review also notes that the population is ageing, while technological change and global migration flows are increasing.

The National Skills Task Force (NSTF, 2000) acknowledges that there is difficulty in pointing out where the main skills gaps and shortages lie in the labour market. It reports that after having examined the skills needs at all levels in the labour market they identified the following six main areas of skill deficiency:

- Basic skills
- Generic skills
- Mathematics skills
- Intermediate level skills
- Specialist information and communications technology skills
- Major adult skills gaps

These findings accord with Frogner (2002):

Shift in the occupational structure from manual to non-manual labour of the labour over the past 30 year has implied a shift in the demand for skills from manual skills to skills related to cognitive ability. The demand for generic skills such as communication, problem solving and the ability to use IT equipment is rising, while that for skills related to manual dexterity and strength is falling.

(p.20)

Westwood (2004) notes that along with the DfES Skills Survey, the Institute of Directors (IOD), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) have all commissioned and published research on skills which have concluded that a skills gap exists and that young people leaving education do not possess all the skills that make up employability or job readiness.

It can be said that since the publication of Finegold and Soskice's (1988) work, much of the focus of policy has been on boosting the supply of skilled and educated workers for the labour force (Keep and Mayhew, 1999; Grugulis *et al* 2004, p.1) rather than on the demand of specific skills by industry. Using data from the Skills Needs in Britain Survey, Westwood (2004) points out that vocational and job specific skills are what employers are most seeking, while wider more generic skills form the remaining areas that are lacking.

Recently, in its response to the Leitch Report, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS, 2007) states that while the UK has 'one of the highest employment rates among the major economies' (75%), 'more than a third of all adults in the UK don't have the equivalent of a basic school certificate' (p.6). The report, however, looks back to the past, as it talks about 'giving employers and learners the purchasing power'; training credits in the 1980s were introduced to give young people such 'purchasing power', but this was a failure.

Noting that the major focus of the Leitch report was on training and skills for adults the DIUS points out that, in order for the long term skills needs to be met, young people must also be 'equipped with the skills, competencies, understanding and attributes' needed for success 'in a modern, sustainable economy' (DIUS, 2007, p.14).

One scheme geared towards the upskilling of the labour force is the apprenticeship programme. It is a training model which presents a framework within which knowledge, skills and occupational identity can be developed. The term is usually used as 'a shorthand' to describe the process of learning a craft or trade (from the arts to manufacturing) from experts over a period of time (Fuller and Unwin, 2007). As they note:

Since 2004, the brand name 'Apprenticeships' has been used in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to cover all government-funded youth training schemes, apart from 'E2E', which stands for Entry to Employment', a vocational preparation programme for 16-18 year olds.
(p.3)

They go on to point out that due to a 'low status image problem' and the pressure which has been placed on schools to encourage students to remain in full-time education post-16 and progress to university, along with the lack of employers who are willing to take on young apprentices, it has been rather difficult to raise the profile of the apprenticeship scheme. The Apprentices Newsletter (LSC, 2006) nonetheless reported that 130,000 employers are engaged in the scheme and over 259, 000 young people currently working towards completion.

One of the benefits of this programme is that it gives young people the status of being employed, as one of the scheme's requirements is that the apprentices must be employed prior to joining the scheme. Such programmes therefore have the ability of allowing young people to develop occupational skills while earning. However, the terminology is confusing as there is a similar 'programme led apprenticeship' (PLA), where 'apprentices' are not employed and do not come into contact with an employer, but instead are required to attend college or a training provider at least once a week (Unwin and Wellington, 2001, p.12).

2.6 The value of educational qualifications

Watts (1985) argued that, while education may have the much loftier ideals of being concerned with the development of the individual's full range of abilities and aptitudes, one of the main expectations that young people and their parents have is simply 'to help enter a worthwhile job'. Certainly, educational qualifications are one of the most common measures used to screen applicants for entry into the job market. Wolf (2002) agrees, suggesting that looking at any job advertisement will bear this out, and that without educational qualifications, employers would find it very hard to rank people in terms of employability:

We know that employers use qualifications partly as a simple screening device, and that, in a modern economy, people are well aware of this on their own and their children's behalf: industrial economies create their own demands for education.

(Wolf, 2002, p.54)

Yet, as Wolf argues, if the broader skills people acquire are important for growth, it is surprising that education might be valued simply in terms of how many qualifications one has, or whether a college education might be better than that at a high or secondary school. Watts (1985) also points out that the education system in general does not favour those who plan to leave school early and follow a vocational career path:

At each stage of the educational system the content of the educational curriculum tends to be determined by the needs not of those who will 'drop out' at that stage, but of those who will go on to the next.

(p.15)

He continues:

although the examination system provides an effective motivational tool for some, it is counter-productive for others, and can indeed alienate them permanently from formal learning.

(p.15)

Muller and Shavit (1997) suggest that using qualifications as the major criterion for job entry is as it should be, in that they may be viewed as 'the single most important determinant of occupational success in industrialised societies (p.1). Jenkins and Wolf (2005) also highlight the fact that qualifications are used by employers as signals of productivity. However, they refute the suggestion that qualifications may signal affective traits or other behaviour as well as cognitive ability and skills. They make reference to the findings of Weiss (1984) who uncovered no differences in productivity for any given day of work when he compared the work patterns of high school graduates and non-graduates in a manufacturing company. However, it was noted that the graduates had better attendance records and were less likely to quit.

Jenkins and Wolf (2005) pointed out that qualifications are not the most important factor in employee selection. They report that two-thirds of the employers surveyed in the Workplace Employee Relations Survey in 1998 stated that qualifications were ranked fifth behind other factors such as experience, skills, motivation and references. Referring to evidence obtained from 'in-depth employer interviews' studying the use of psychometric tests for selection, Jenkins and Wolf (2005) point out that:

In every case where qualifications were used, it was largely at the shortlisting stage, suggesting that employers believed them to be useful but not perfect signals of productivity.

(p.157)

They go on to say that:

... except in those cases where a few specific (and often sector specific) qualifications were important, employers consistently made only a few broad distinctions between qualifications levels and types. They did not attempt to keep up with the details of qualifications reform, and these broad categories were expressed in terms of very well-recognized academic qualifications, such as “5 GCSEs including Maths and English”, or “a university degree”.

(p.157)

Such an observation is important, as the multitude of vocational awards and qualifications on offer over the last twenty years are likely to be unhelpful to employers who are unwilling or unable to keep up with ‘the details of qualifications reform’.

In any case, Jenkins and Wolf (2005) state that in the UK vocational qualifications are ‘not recognized by most employers’ and ‘have very little value in the labour market’ (p.167). Cockett (1996) agrees:

There is no vocational advantage in following such a course since employers will recruit what they see to be the best available students and their measure for this continues to be examination success.

(p.45)

However as Wolf (2002) goes on to point out, this is not straightforward, for not all qualifications are equally weighted; different qualifications have different status, and some jobs pay better than others:

If a degree pays better than a City and Guilds diploma, this may be largely, or entirely, a result of that same screening for ability... employers just assume that graduates are brighter and keep the better-paid jobs for them. So we need to look inside a group with equivalent education: for example, those same graduates for whom so many occupations are now reserved.

(Wolf 2002, p.31)

She further highlights that even though engineers may have higher rates of return in terms of salary and lifestyle, the social rate on return will look much lower than for those qualifying in social sciences due to the expensive nature of running engineering courses.

Jenkins and Wolf (2005) suggest that there is a declining use of qualifications as the most important signal for employment suitability and are turning to psychometric tests

instead. They posit that this may be due to a response to the widespread publicity over falling school standards and a lack of confidence in the examinations and qualifications system.

2.7. Summary

Despite many years of vocational initiatives, observers still describe an educational system geared up to academic achievement. Vocational education supposedly prepares individuals for the world of work, yet employers are complaining that the young school leavers lack basic employability skills.

Vocational education continues to be seen as being for less academic students while, on the other hand, academic education is viewed as being appropriate for the 'brighter' one. Vocational education is therefore usually aimed at low achieving students and thus, as some writers suggest, seen to be a means of positioning and preparing people to 'know their place' in society.

There is also a general observation of a lack of parity within the labour market and the perception that a vocational job or career may pay less than one requiring academic qualifications. This has the potential of acting as a deterrent for students as well as a reason for parents to influence their children not to enter such occupational routes.

While many initiatives, such as NVQs and GNVQs, have been tried as a means of encouragement for young people to take up vocational routes, young people are reported to show a lack of understanding of what the term 'vocational' means. Thus vocational pathways are still not attracting the attention they deserve as they continue to lack parity of esteem both educationally and occupationally.

Even with the introduction of GNVQs, now renamed AVCEs, and later Applied GCEs, such courses continue to be considered as being inferior to that of A levels. These views are held by parents and even teachers, who encourage young people to seek academic qualifications and consequently, jobs which require such qualifications.

There is a concern that young people entering employment lack the necessary employability skills for the labour market. Core (or Key) skills were introduced to

help young people develop these skills. However, the term ‘skill’ has several definitions and is complex to measure, which itself can lead to further academic and vocational division.

The employers complain that young employees are still poor at the ‘key skills’ of numeracy, literacy, communication, and also note that punctuality is a problem. The government therefore instigated a review of the skills which are needed by the UK to maximize its economic growth by the year 2020. The report from this review notes that while the UK’s skills base has made improvements, the UK still lags behind many of its competitors. In addition, several studies which have looked at the UK skills base have confirmed that young school leavers lack the skills which make them ready for employability.

However, one problem which has been noticed is that rather than boosting skills to meet the demands of industry, the focus has been on boosting skilled and educated workers for the labour force. This is because the development of skills is seen as contributing to increasing performance. The more skilled one is the higher is expected to be their performance output. There is some debate about whether the relationship between the two is that simple.

Developed and developing countries around the world argue that in order to have a sustainable and competitive economy, their workforce must be highly skilled and well educated, but there has been some difficulty in pointing out exactly what skills are needed. The skills required will be dependent on the labour market and hence will change as the market changes. While employers admit that their staff do not have the right skills for the future, they are expecting individuals to take responsibility for their own skill development.

With this strong belief that the development of skills is related to sustaining a competitive productive economy, the UK government set out a national skills strategy in 2003.

The Caribbean’s British Colonial heritage and the subsequent atavistic association of slavery with its links to manual labour in the fields, as well as the fact that the first

technical schools were reform schools have left a tainted view of vocational education and training in these countries.

Apprenticeships provide a means of improving the skills base while at the same time providing employment for young people. However, young people will not be eager to take part in the scheme if it is not explained to them properly. The system at present shows inconsistencies, as some are delivered totally in colleges while others are delivered by an employer. It has been repeatedly pointed out that these courses must have relevance to young people if they are to be fully engaged with them.

While some policy makers argue that education is the key to a successful economy, many others argue that there is no evidence to support such an argument. Nevertheless, there is a need for a balanced education and training system. Educational qualifications are the common measures used to screen applicants for employment, as employers regard them as signals of productivity. However, other criteria are also used such as experience, skills motivation and references. Also as qualifications are not all equally weighted they carry differing status and some jobs pay better than others. There is a perception that the more education one acquires the more one is like to earn subsequently.

To summarise, the main issues identified in this chapter are that:

1. There is a lack of understanding of what the term vocational means.
2. Vocational courses and qualifications do not carry the same apparent value as academic courses and qualifications.
3. There is a perception that the more qualifications one attains, the better the job one is likely to get and the better will be the pay.

These three issues will form part of the theoretical framework of this study.

Chapter Three

MAKING CAREER CHOICES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the ways in which young people go about making their choices with regards to the subjects studied at school and also to their future careers. It argues that choice and decision-making are complex and multi-layered tasks. It then goes on to highlight some of the models that have been developed to explain career choice and decision-making. Finally, it examines the factors that influence young people in the making of their choices, including parents, teachers, siblings, peers and the media.

3.2 Careers education and guidance

According to the National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance (DfES, 2003b):

Careers education helps young people develop the knowledge and skills they need to make successful choices, manage transitions in learning and move into work... Career Guidance enables [them] to use the knowledge and skills they develop to make the decisions about learning and work that are right for them (p.6).

In the UK the 1973 Employment and Training Act made providing a careers service a statutory duty on all Local Education Authorities (LEAs). This was funded through the Rate Support Grant (Watts and McGowan, 2007). However, the 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act removed this statutory duty from the LEAs and transferred it to the then Secretary of State for Employment.

While some careers education and guidance took place in schools before 1997 it was always on the terms of a partnership or service level agreement. Thus a school or school head could refuse to use a careers provider. As a statutory guidance service, young people would have access to guidance but not necessarily in school. It may be that a young person had to visit an office in the town centre, making a special effort, always difficult when in school twenty five hours a week. Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) became statutory within schools in the UK in 1997 (Harris, 1999).

The Education Act of 1997 mandated all schools to deliver a CEG curriculum in years 9 to 11 (Harris 1999).

In 1999, two important documents were produced. A Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report entitled *Bridging the Gap* highlighted the number of 16 to 19 year olds not in education, employment or training. These became known by the acronym 'NEET' (Colley et al, 2008). A White Paper *Learning to Succeed: A New Framework for Learning* (DfES, 1999) announced a new careers and advice strategy as part of a new youth support service called 'Connexions'. This was brought about by a merger of the Careers Services into a 'Connexions' Service through a refocusing of resources and with the responsibility of reducing the number of young people who were not in education, employment or training. Connexions provided a range of information, advice and guidance which, through designated individuals, called 'mentors', included careers, teenage pregnancies, drugs advice and so forth.

In 2003, schools received a set of guidelines published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the *National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance* (DfES, 2003b). Unlike citizenship, which is a statutory curriculum, these were only guidelines.

These guidelines related to the year groups between year 9 and post-16. However, the Education (Extension of Careers Education) (England) Regulations (2003), which came into force in September 2004, extended this to include Years 7 and 8.

Thus schools should now have a CEG policy that covers young people from year 7 through to Years 12 and 13. However, in practice, most schools have a policy that really begins in Year 9 and focuses around Year 9 options choices. Even with this framework there is no single prescribed format for the delivery of careers education and guidance in schools and therefore, in practice, an array of approaches is to be found. However, according to the DfES (2004), most schools use a combination of the following to teach careers education:

- *Specialist career lessons*
- *Careers activities in tutorial and enrichment programmes*
- *Careers units in PSHE and citizenship programmes*
- *Careers activities in subject lessons (e.g. English, Science, humanities, ICT)*

- *Careers activities in vocational and special courses*
 - *Careers activities in the Connexions Resource Centre*
 - *Special events and extra curricular activities (e.g. option evenings, career conventions, industry days, work experience, assemblies, visits and taster days)*
 - *Drop-in sessions, clinics and surgeries (mainly post-16)*
 - *Supported self-study and independent work (mainly post-16)*
- (p.13)

In some schools the scope of the choice is very narrow, while in other schools, because of a more confederation or consortium type of arrangement and the linking into 14-19 initiatives, they have a choice of activities.

According to the Institute of Careers Guidance (2007) individuals approach guidance at (broadly) two levels:

- *Informed users: Individuals who know what they want, and the help they need; can generally search and select appropriate services to meet need and progress.*
- *Non-informed users: Individuals who do not know what they want, often requiring much more complex in-depth help to address a range of work, learning and other related issues. Career guidance in this context can be aspirational and motivational as well as analytical and informative.*

(p.4)

They go on to point out that careers guidance is now provided to both young people and adults by a number of different practitioners and service providers who offer services at differing levels ranging from ‘information and sign posting’ activities to in-depth career guidance.

In April 2008 the Connexions service was disbanded as a national service, and the responsibility for ensuring what is now termed ‘Information, Advice and Guidance’ (IAG) services delivered to young people devolved to the Children and Young People’s Services in Local Authorities (Colley *et al*, 2008). In the past the term IAG has only been used to refer to providing information, advice and guidance to adults. For young people the term used was CEG. Thus, in England, the IAGs are quite separate and distinct from the career guidance services for young people. In Scotland however, there is one organisation that is responsible for both adult and young people’s career guidance (Careers Scotland); this is also the case in Wales (Careers Wales) (Peck, 2004). To facilitate the move back to the local authorities, the DCSF has

published the *Quality Standards for Young People's Information and Guidance* (DCSF, 2008). The standards are an overarching framework for IAG delivery in schools and elsewhere. They do not specify curriculum content, but the *National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance* (DfES, 2003b) does go some way to strengthen the accountability required of schools to ensure the quality of IAG offered to young people and a way of trying to get some consistency across the 150 Local Authorities.

In most areas careers guidance organisations are being commissioned to deliver the IAG services. Working with young people not in education or employment is still an important focus, but the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is now realising that all young people need access to good quality IAG – particularly in the light of the 14-19 curriculum changes. This is therefore seen as an expanding area.

In the case of Antigua, while there is no formal careers education and guidance programme delivered in schools, an initiative launched in 2002 by the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Bank, one of the corporate groups on the island, has presented a number of students with a unique form of career guidance. This takes the form of a two day programme which consists of:

- a general exhibition
- workshops for 'Fast Trac' Students
- seminars for the general public

While the general public are able to attend the general exhibition and the seminars, only selected individuals known as 'Fast Trac Students' are able to attend the workshop sessions. These provide them with the opportunity to engage with business professionals who are able to 'assist them with their career choices and to better prepare them for the world of work' (ABI Financial group, 2008). These individuals are selected from applicants who are attending either secondary or tertiary institutions in Antigua and Barbuda.

3.3 The complexity of choice

The transitions young people make through school and after leaving school are of constant concern in the world of education. As expressed by Lumby and Foskett (2005):

Choice lies at the heart of the whole 14-19 system...

(p.103)

This can be viewed as being due to the complex choices which young people have to make during these years. In Antigua this decision making stage is not as age related as in the UK, but the same choice and decision making is made in the equivalent year groups (yrs 10 and 11 in the UK are equivalent to fourth and fifth Forms in Antigua). At age 13 (UK year 9 or Antiguan third form) young people select the subjects they will do for GCSE in year 11 or CXC in the Antiguan fifth form. At age 16 (end of year 11 or fifth form) the choice is whether or not to continue in education or training, go into employment (whether paid or voluntary), do both or neither. The latter option only occurs in practice within the British context. Such individuals are termed 'NEET' - Not in Employment, Education or Training. Theoretically, one should be actively seeking work to be claiming extended child benefit or job seekers' allowance. In an Antiguan context there are no benefits for those who do not go into employment. For those who choose to continue into education the question is once again which path to take, sixth form or further education. There is one common undertaking between those who go directly into employment at 16 or continue in education; that is choosing what to do.

One of the common assumptions made when discussing making choices is that all things are equal and that all options are available (Law, 1996). As can be seen later in this chapter this is not the case with educational or career choices. Students are diverse individuals who come from varying backgrounds and have varying abilities, interests and desires. Choice is dependent on how much information they receive, the amount of finance available, the types of experiences they have had as well as their own dreams, aspirations and realities. Other people, such as teachers, parents, peers and others will have an impact on the choices made. These choices and decisions are not linear; instead they are very complex, multi-layered and have many different facets coming into play. These factors can be categorised as internal, or due to individual agency,

such as an individual's dreams and aspirations, versus the external factors such as finances, family, peer and other influences plus the opportunities actually available.

3.4 Models of decision making

Lumby and Foskett (2005) suggest that:

Choice in the 14-19 arena must be considered in the context of broader models of choice in education and training.

(p.105)

According to research by Ball et al (1999) 'for some families and friends, the world of further education and training is familiar territory' (p.220). For another group this is new territory, it 'is a frightening world' which is 'difficult and treacherous and sometimes confusing'. It is a world 'which they are nonetheless determined to enter and explore'. For others, it 'is a reluctant alternative to now closed off options – work and income'. So for some, choosing further education and training is a step into the unknown, yet for another group, further education and training is seen as being irrelevant as their expectations of actually obtaining employment are so low.

Payne (2003, p.11) in her review of career decision-making, concludes that, in the main, individuals tend to follow one of three practices: These she termed:

1. Economic
2. Structuralist
3. Pragmatic rationality

The *economic* model of decision making is based on Becker's (1975) Human Capital Theory. It suggests that young people make rational choices based on preconceived economic benefits which they expect to gain from investing in education and training. In so doing the young people are said to work out not only the direct costs (such as tuition and living expenses) but also the 'opportunity costs' (any benefits which may be lost due to making one choice over another, such as possible income earned) for the choice before making a decision (Techanuvat, 2004, p.6). Implicit in the Human Capital Theory is the assumption that a person's earning and employment opportunities can be improved as a result of equipping them with the requisite skills which are necessary in the workplace (Iannelli and Raffe, 2007). One argument against such a model is that the long period in which the rates of return on education may take to be amassed makes it 'difficult to calculate the future returns to investments' (Payne,

2003, p.12). Scott (2000) suggests that the assumption made by social scientists that people are motivated by money and by the possibility of making a profit has led to the construction of formal and often predictive models of human behaviour. Blenkinsop *et al* (2006), however, argue that few young people (or indeed, adults) appeared to approach decision making in the planned, context-free way assumed by the economic model.

Gambetta (1996) defines the *structuralist* model of decision-making as one in which choices are made as a result of constraints over which the young people have no control. These constraints may be institutional, economic or cultural (Payne, 2003; Techanuvat, 2004; Lumby and Foskett, 2005). The structuralist position is exemplified by Ryrie (1981) who concluded, from a three year research project conducted in Scottish comprehensive schools, that ‘choices about staying on or leaving did not usually involve conscious decisions or rational choice, but were based on assumptions of long standing’ (Payne, 2003, p.11). However, as noted by Lumby and Foskett (2005) the danger with such a model is that it suggests that the outcomes will be predictable solely on the basis of individual, cultural or economic circumstance whereas, to the contrary, young people are known to make decisions outside these cultural, institutional and economic norms.

Hodkinson *et al* (1996) proposed the *pragmatic rationality* model (Figure 3.1) in which career choices are made through the experiences and perceptions of the individual making the decision. Hodkinson *et al* (1996) and Hodkinson (1998) have criticized the two earlier models (economic and structuralist) as he points out that career decision making is not so clear cut, because people have false starts. They may start doing one thing and then they realise for one reason or another that they do not wish to continue with it. That does not mean that they have been a failure; rather it means that they have learnt that they did not like it or that it was not what they had expected and they moved on.

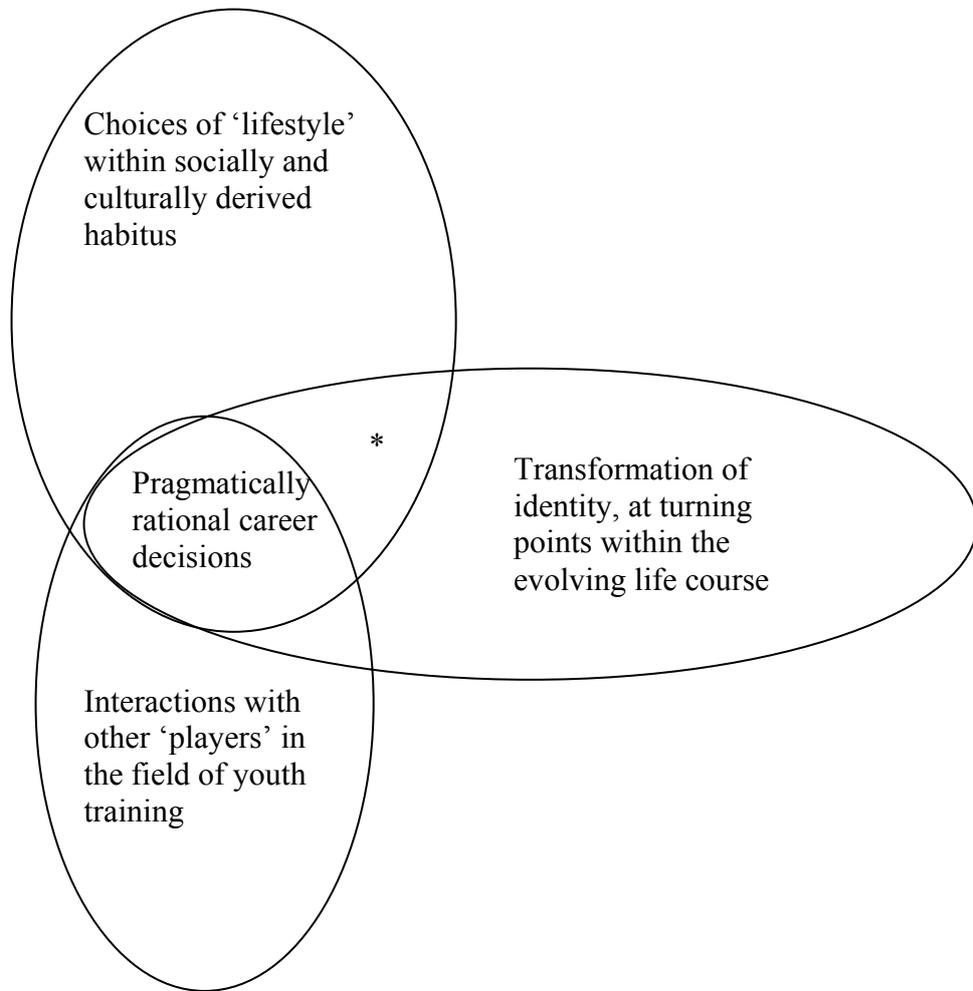


Figure 3.1 Model of Pragmatic Rationality
(Hodkinson *et al* (1996, p.149)

Hodkinson (1998) explains that the way in which young people make their decisions about career choices cannot be adequately described as being rational or irrational. He points out that decisions were sometimes made on a partially rational basis, taking a degree of evidence into account from research information, applying logic, and considering the range of options. These decisions were also made for more pragmatic reasons, taken as an opportunity to fit a particular course of action. Miller (1983) supports this by highlighting the role of what he terms ‘happenstance’ where a chance or random event may have an important impact on career choice. Such a course of action may be based partly on information provided by incomplete research and partly on the intuition of the decision makers. This looks as if research had indicated, up to a point, that a particular course was suitable to follow. It was sometimes seen by the decision makers that the opportunity presented was too good to miss, as it fitted with a

choice they had partially identified as suitable, so it could be taken without considering any other choice.

Maguire *et al* (2000) have further developed the pragmatic rationality model by extending it in two ways. They suggest that there are three critical ‘arenas of action and centres of choice making’ that interact in shaping choice. These are:

- The arena of family, home and domesticity
- The arena of work, education and training
- The arena of leisure and social life.

Secondly, they suggest that the choice model must include both spatial and temporal components. This takes into account the individual’s personal and local environment and the people they mix with, their community, their family and others, and the realisation that choices may change over time.

Wright (2005), however, considers that this model should be placed along with its antecedents (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996) under the banner of ‘hybrid’ models as they ‘accommodate both the role of external structures and individual agency and identity’ (Wright, 2005, p.10).

More recently, two more models have appeared in the literature on educational choice and decision making; Foskett and Hemsley-Brown’s (2001) model of choice and decision making in education and training and White’s (2007) model of decision making behaviour. One of the models that has been found to be helpful and seems to bring a lot of the themes together and acknowledge that choice and decision making is such a complex multi-layered phenomenon is the model developed by Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001). In an attempt to highlight the complex nature of choice and decision making, they have developed the model, by combining Hodkinson *et al*’s model with Maguire *et al*’s further development of the model, to show the various processes that are now suggested to be involved (Figure 3.2). They demonstrate that these processes are all occurring at the same time.

The model comprises four components, namely:

- context
- choice influencers
- choosers
- choice.

The *context* component represents the various environments within which an individual lives and operates such as their family background, their social cultural and economic environment, the institutions which they attend or work in, and the geographical locations which their lives encompass.

The *choice influencers* are those elements which, as a result of the lived experiences of an individual (interaction with the context), act as influences on the choices which an individual will make. These choice influencers include processes and people such as the media, teachers, friends and people.

According to Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) the *choosers* are those individuals who make the choices. They may be any of or a combination of parent(s), child or young adult but as set out in the diagram, this component seems to consist of the internal factors that influence the decision.

The *choice* is derived from a reciprocal action among the other three components of the model namely: the ‘context’, the choice ‘influencers’ and the ‘choosers’. As such it is not unalterable and therefore can be revoked, especially if there is a change in any one of the aforementioned components.

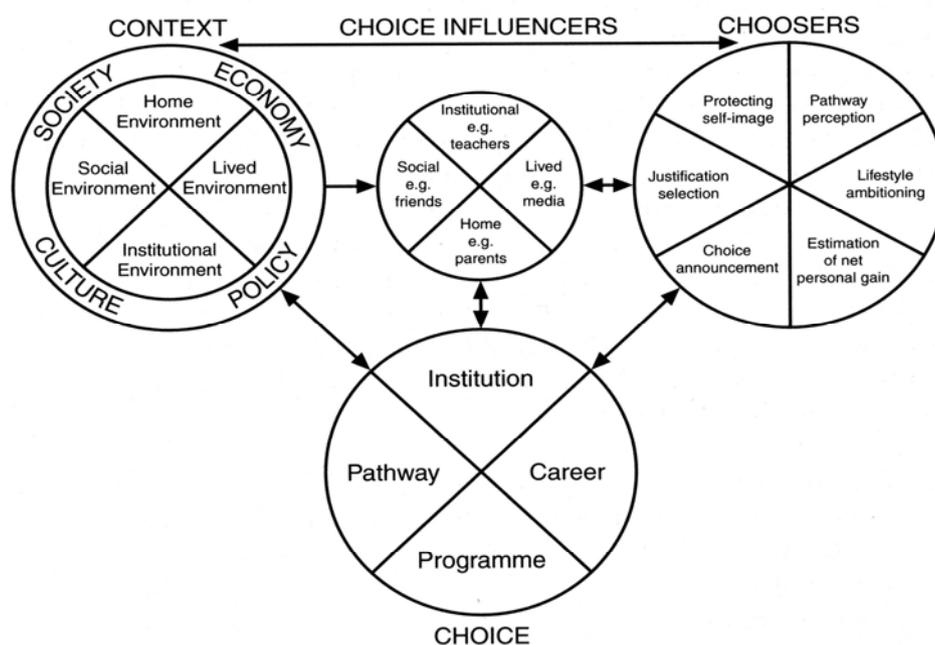


Figure 3.2 Model of choice and decision-making in education and training (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001, p.215))

Although it is a very detailed model in the sense of its bringing many relevant themes together, it does not present a great deal of exploration of those themes. Each of the themes will have its own content and perspectives and Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) do not go into any great detail about each of the different themes. Thus this model is only a framework, but as such, it is intended that it can be as the overarching framework of this thesis, operating at a super-surface level. There are particular themes in the model that can be further explored by drawing on the wider literature to help to understand and explain it. And as the same terminology is not always used between different researchers, links will have to be drawn between the two. This chapter will therefore continue to explore these themes in greater depth by looking at the literature in general.

White (2007) has developed a pair of conceptual models of decision making of Year 9 (Figure 3.3) and Year 11 (Figure 3.4) students. The models comprise three choice stages (primary, secondary and tertiary) and three choice types (inclusive, exclusive and default). The choice stages identified are used to represent ‘the ordinal nature of the decision making process or the priority given to the particular choices’ and White notes that they ‘should not be confused with the levels of education in the UK’ (White, 2007b, p.46). On the other hand the choice types are used to conceptualise the different ways in which young people make their choices at the end of their compulsory schooling. A choice is said to be inclusive when ‘the selection of a particular outcome or the desire to take a certain course of action’ is made (*ibid* p.39). On the other hand a choice is said to be exclusive when the choice ‘start(s) from the premise that some outcomes are to be avoided if at all possible (*ibid*, p.41), while default choices are said to be those in which the student has had ‘a lack of engagement’ (*ibid*, p.41).

Choice stage:	Type of Choice:		Total
	Inclusive	Exclusive	
Primary			
Secondary			
Total number of choices			

Figure 3.3 Year 9 choice model (White, 2007b)

Choice stage:	Type of Choice:			Totals
	Inclusive	Exclusive	Default	
Primary				
Secondary				
Tertiary				
Totals				

Figure 3.4 Year 11 choice model (White, 2007b)

While White (2002; 2007; 2007b) has chosen to split the model into two; one for year 9 and one for year 11, one model could really suffice, as the subtle difference between the Year 9 (Figure 3.3) and year 11 model (Figure 3.4) is that the Year 9 model does not contain a ‘tertiary’ stage or a default choice. White (2007), while noting that ‘in year 9 students were faced with a choice of optional subjects to complement those that were mandatory’, suggests that the reason for not including default choices in the Year 9 model lies in the restrictive nature of the choices. However, on the contrary, the mere fact that some choices were mandatory suggests that these were default choices which were already made for the students.

However, the concept of ‘inclusive’, ‘exclusive’ and ‘default’ choice making provides another perspective on this process and could fit with other models that have been discussed. As such, this part of the model may be considered as useful for this study.

3.5 How are career choices made?

From the literature it is clear that the studies which have been done on young people’s career choices hinge on the particular perspectives of the researchers involved and these perspectives often reflect the social, economic and cultural perspectives prominent at certain times, particularly in US and British societies. Two popular theories which have been put forward to explain the way in which young people make their choices post 16 are the traditional theories of ‘structure and agency’ and Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital (‘Habitus’). Both these theories seek to place the outcomes of choice and decision making on the characteristics and effects of the society in which they live and work. These theories relate to the ‘context’ of Foskett and Hemsley-Brown’s (2001) model framework. As already discussed, this is a way of trying to understand the way in which young people at school/college think about schooling in relation to their future and how they make their choices. Foskett and

Hemsley-Brown (2001) have pointed to four areas which have emerged from their study; the context, the choice influencers, the choosers and the choice.

However, while these themes come across very distinctly in the literature, at the same time they also overlap and influence each other. This has also been pointed out by Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001). This overlap therefore produces a complex mixture of levels and themes. For example, personal dreams may be influenced by the hierarchical levels suggested by either early personal experiences or advice received. It is likely that students will choose their subjects in relation to the career they plan to follow, even if this plan is unrealistic or unrealisable.

However, on closer inspection these decisions may have been made due to prior experiences, influences from others, financial or other constraints or a combination of these factors (Blenkinsop *et al*, 2006). These factors will be examined further later in the chapter.

3.5.1 Hierarchies of career choices

From the suggestions made in Chapter Two, that vocational subjects and careers are often perceived as being inferior to those viewed as academic, there appears to be a notion of a hierarchy in the ways in which subjects and careers are viewed. Bathmaker (2005) argues that the typology developed by Macrae *et al* (1997) which divides the formal learning society into the categories of outsiders, hangers in, acceptors and embedded learners ‘suggests a stratification which constitutes not simply inclusion and exclusion, but layers of inclusion’ (p.83). She goes on to point out that ‘these layers relate to the different routes followed by young people and the opportunities open to them to pursue those different routes’. However, vocational routes, as discussed in Chapter Two, are suggested by Bathmaker to be ‘associated in the education policy rhetoric with young people who are not motivated by the academic curriculum’ (*ibid*, p.86). Such young people are seen to ‘prefer a curriculum whose content and approach relates to the practice of the world of work’ (p.86). This hierarchy also extends between the types of qualifications taken. For example, Unwin and Wellington (2001) note that even though Advanced GNVQs or Vocational A levels have been available as alternatives to A levels since 1992, the apprentices to whom they had spoken did not

regard them as a worthwhile option because they saw them as being at a lower level than A levels.

3.5.2 Personal aspirations and dreams versus reality

There has been relatively little written on aspirations and what is meant by the term. The Collins English Dictionary (1994) defines aspiration as ‘a strong desire to achieve something, such as success’. While many education policy documents speak of raising young people’s aspirations, aspiration is a term which has different meanings for different people. White (2002) shares the view of Andres *et al* (1999) that occupational aspirations play a central role in the way in which young people make the transition from school to work and therefore stresses the need for it to be included in studies of career choice and decision-making. In the Foskett and Hemsley-Brown model (Figure 3.2) it falls under the category of ‘life style ambitioning’ of the choosers.

Davies and Biesta (2007) cite a case study of ‘Cathryn’, who, although taking up a place on an administration/information technology course, had a strong aspiration to become a nurse. The administration/information technology course was just a safety net in case the career in nursing was not possible. For some, their aspirations may be of an ‘academic’ nature while for others it may be ‘vocational’. Many young people aspire to become celebrities (footballers, models, film stars, singers and so on), but in the majority of cases this is unrealistic. For some the aspiration lasts throughout their schooling and becomes reality in adulthood, while others go through several changes in their aspirations (Super, 1980; Trice and McClellan, 1993; Phipps, 1995; Schoon and Parsons, 2002). On the other hand, aspirations are sometimes realised, but not through paid work.

Watts and Bridges (2006) argue that there is an assumption that young people who do not participate in higher education have low aspirations. However, they suggest that:

...non-participation is not simply a matter of low aspirations but that it may arise from different aspirations; and that these different aspirations are linked to the lives and lifestyles of young people who may or may not recognize any benefit afforded by HE.

(pp. 267-268)

They therefore claim that there needs to be a better understanding of the lives and lifestyles of those who do not wish to enter higher education. They argue that it may be more productive to encourage young people to excel at what they are interested in rather than simply trying to get them to head for further study. They point out that in a dual economy, vocational careers are needed just as much as the professions. Having a vocational aspiration does not mean that one's aspiration is low.

Furlong (1987, p.61) suggested that while levels of aspirations may not affect the availability of jobs, they do affect young people's willingness to accept a particular job, and their satisfaction once in the job. Thus, as highlighted by Watts and Bridges, young people do need to have a clearer understanding of both academic and vocational routes so as to make better informed choices. Clearly, from Watts and Bridges' findings, young people have a lack of understanding of what higher education is all about. This leads to misconceived perceptions. One does not have to attend higher education to achieve an aspiration of being a politician or even prime minister; yet such a choice would be considered a high aspiration. In fact, as noted by Watts and Bridges (2006) the financial burden of going to university 'may outweigh future financial benefits' (pp.269-270) as there is no longer a guarantee that by going to university one will obtain better paid employment.

Young people's belief in themselves is clearly a key to setting and achieving their aspirations. However, sometimes an individual's self confidence can be eroded if he or she is constantly put down by others or made to fail (Watts and Bridges, 2006).

Bandura *et al* (2001) note that:

Unless people believe they can produce desired outcomes by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties.

(p.187)

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) observed, within their study of Modern Apprenticeships, that the majority of young people tended to set themselves high aspirations. This was sometimes even though teachers and career advisers were trying to lower these high, and in some cases, unrealistic expectations to relate to their more realistic GCSE predictions. These young people saw themselves in what Ball *et al* (1999) refer to as their 'imagined futures' entering high status occupations which

require high academic qualifications. They suggest that this may be due to either one or a combination of the following happening:

1. the desire to promote self esteem
2. bolstering of confidence (which is a key concept promoted by schools in preparing students for public examinations)
3. raising of aspirations (which is an explicit aim of many schools).

These expectations could arise from the individual or from the school environment.

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) note:

Teachers and careers advisers may be under some internal political pressure to promote aspirations to high GCSE performance and progression to academic programmes post-16 for the long-term financial and market profile benefits of the school, perhaps even at the expense of individual pupil needs.

(p.133)

They go on to state that the expectations of high GCSEs ‘promote high aspirations in terms of post-16 pathways’. Thus the majority of those who expect to gain five or more good GCSEs hope to continue on to pursue an A level or an advanced GNVQ programme, with the most popular being the A level route.

Roberts (1977) views career plans as being based on impressions of the occupations open to the individual. It is true that, to some extent, occupational aspirations are influenced by opportunities available in the local labour market. For example, it is more likely for a young British person to aspire to be a train driver than for a young Antiguan to do so. This is so simply because of there being this type of job available in the UK and none in Antigua. This is, however, not to say that a young Antiguan could not aspire to emigrate and become a train driver. The young person could have been influenced by television, a travel experience or even a family member or friend who works in that industry. Young people may aspire to become astronauts but whether or not this becomes a reality is another case. It should also be pointed out that because a particular individual does not achieve that goal it does not mean that they were a failure, for that aspiration may have led them to another related career such as becoming, for example, an aircraft mechanic or a pilot.

Noting that some 9000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in the Staffordshire area since 1997, Slack (2003) points out that, even with the diminishing industrial sector,

many young people, particularly boys, continue to aspire to craft and manual jobs. This is despite much emphasis being placed in policy documents on raising the aspirations of young people. However, as noted by Watts and Bridges (2006), these aspirations are not the aspirations of young people but rather the aspirations of governments. They also point out that there is a lack of knowledge within society about vocational pathways. For example, many of the young people in their study did not know that an NVQ Level 4 was the equivalent to a degree qualification. For some the idea of higher education was for those who wanted to go into careers such as medicine and law.

Furlong (1987) outlined a number of reasons why a young person might enter a job different to the one which they had previously aspired to. These included:

1. problems in securing the type of work they wanted
2. lacking the necessary qualifications needed
3. discovering they were too young
4. finding an alternative job which sounded interesting or which was thought to have better prospects
5. the loss of interest in the original aspiration.

Furlong refers to two theories which have been used to explain young people's transitions from adolescence to adulthood. The first is termed 'socialisation' theory and has relevance to the society and culture sub-sections within the 'context' section of the Foskett and Hemsley-Brown framework. This theory suggests that 'people gain impressions about themselves through making comparisons with significant others' (p.59). In other words, it is through the process of socialisation that people make judgements about their self worth and what they may aspire to. These judgements may be subjective, objective or a combination of both. Furlong posits that it is through social structures such as the family (home environment) or school (institutional environment) that young people are provided with insights into opportunities available to them in the labour market. These are then weighed in terms of what they wish to pursue. The second theory is termed 'opportunity structure' theory. This theory was developed by Roberts (1977) who had rejected the socialisation theory because he felt the occupational self concept on which the socialisation theory was based was no longer valid. Roberts saw opportunity structure 'as providing a more adequate theory of occupational entry' (Furlong, 1987, p.59). In this theory he suggests that neither young people nor adults choose their jobs but rather take what is available.

Bandura *et al* (2001) suggest that young people's self efficacy, academic aspirations and subsequent achievement are fashioned and modelled from their parent's own perceived self efficacy and academic aspirations, which are in turn influenced by their 'familial socio-economic status' (p.188). However, while there is no doubt strong evidence, as described below, that parents have a great influence on children, this is only part of the story. Otherwise it would not be possible to account for those who come from homes of high economic status and high aspirations but had low aspirations; or conversely those who come from very poor homes with little aspiration but they themselves developed high goals and ideals and subsequently achieved them.

The theory of 'possible selves' developed by Markus and Nurius (1987) argues that as individuals go through life they form 'very detailed' pictures of themselves comprised of likes and dislikes, abilities and inabilities, their attributes and behaviour in general. They say that individuals:

...know what they would like to become, what they could become, and what they are afraid of becoming.

(p.157)

In other words people develop a conceptual view of their future made up of their dreams, realities and fears. This conceptual view guides them as to what is possible and what is not. This theory includes elements of White's (2007) 'exclusive' decision making, in that it is suggested young people are considering their dislikes and inabilities as well as the 'inclusive' aspects of what they would like to become. Markus and Nurius go on to point out:

Possible selves encompass within their scope visions of desired and undesired states. Very often they also include some idea about the way to achieve these ends and thereby provide the means-ends patterns for new behaviour.

(p.159)

Here, elements of Payne's 'pragmatic rationality' are observed.

3.6 Influences on career choices

Sources of influence come in varying forms. The sphere of influence from which guidance to young people may come are:

- the family (which may further be subdivided into parents, siblings, and the extended family)
- friends/peers
- teachers
- media
- society
- finances

These are referred to as choice influencers in the framework. Whether it be parent, sibling, other family member, friend or teacher, other people with whom young people come into contact play key roles as sources of influence, positively or negatively, on the decisions they make. Kidd (1984), in her study of the way in which young people perceived the decision making process, found that other people were frequently cited as being an influence. Of particular importance as Kidd notes, is that one of the ways in which parents, relatives and teachers were perceived as influencing young people's decisions was 'by transmitting messages about the youngster's suitability for different types of occupations' (p.31).

Similar observations have also been made by Payne (2003), Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) and Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006). For ease of explanation the various 'influencers' are discussed separately in the sections that follow although they are likely to operate in combination with each other and with other, as yet unknown factors.

3.6.1 Parental influence

Parental influence, as well as taking different forms, also acts at different levels which become even more complicated as parents may have several different roles in influencing their children. These roles are neither clear-cut nor distinct, as they often overlap. As will be shown later, parents may be seen as setting an example (which may be good or bad), or parents may be seen as being very pragmatic, wanting the best for their children, as well as being a source of emotional and physical support

(de Ruyter, 2007). At times parents are unsure whether they ought to simply guide their children or take a more persuasive or interventionist approach. Trying to give encouragement is often perceived as a source of pressure (Blenkinsop *et al*, (2006). In effect it can be said that parents have a powerful but ambiguous influence on young people (Otto and Call, 1985; Middleton and Loughead, 1993). It may only be possible to examine these complex interrelated types and levels of influences which young people undergo by listening to young people reflecting on their influences as they are the only people who can know and be able to subjugate all these complicated effects (Cullingford, 2002).

Social learning theory proposes that individuals learn human behaviour observationally by modelling other people's behaviour (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, since parents are usually the very first people children have contact with, parents' actions and words are the first impressions young people have of how things are or should be done – their initial construct of the world (Ronstadt, 1983; 1984). Mitchell *et al* (1979) support this theory by suggesting that as parents are a child's first teacher, for many (if not all) the parent becomes their role model, and while for some this may diminish and even disappear as they grow older, for others this influence remains and may have some considerable impact on their eventual career choice. Parents are therefore able to influence their children's aspirations through the examples they set for them (Kidd, 1984). Kidd, for example, notes that identification with members of the immediate family played an important part in the development of preferences in his research.

As highlighted by some of the cases cited in Jones *et al* (2004), parents are able to offer different levels of support to their children. In terms of financial support this may lead to some having to ration funds due to having more than one child. However, it has also been noted that some parents will try and support their children however they can; some might cash in their life savings and/or take on extra work. Social networking is also a role that parents will play in helping their offspring find employment through contacts they may have.

Jones *et al* (2004) argue that:

Most young people follow normative social-class patterns. Those from middle-class families enter education routes and receive financial support from their parents, and most working –class young people enter work routes and expect to be financial (sic) independent.

(p.224)

Jones *et al* (2004) explain that one of the ways in which parents are able to support young people is by allowing them to live in the parental home. This allows them to make considerable savings on expenditure. However, as they note, not all are willing to do so freely. Some require their children ‘to pay for their board’ while others do not even allow them to live there at all. In such cases the young person must either find some kind of employment or take out a loan.

One of the very strong arguments in terms of influences on educational choice and decision making is that of the continued effect of financial pressures. While young people are free, to a certain extent, to make their own choices, as explained by Jones *et al* (2004), this is constrained by their dependence on their parents for financial support. As they highlight with the case of Donna (p.210), some young people are unable to continue in full time education because of the need to earn money to survive. For some young people therefore, pathways such as the apprenticeship training programme offer an opportunity to earn while they learn.

According to Jones *et al* (2004, p. 211) parents’ beliefs about education tend to be derived from their social class structures. They suggest:

...that supportive family life is a key element in successful transitions and that lack of family support can lead to or exacerbate social exclusion.

(p.222)

It can be argued that parents’ suggestions and support are often limited because of their lack of knowledge and awareness of information. Parents try to do their best in order to give support but outside of those parameters their ideas and knowledge may be limited. As noted by Laband and Lentz, (1985, p.16) ‘the parent cannot transfer what he doesn’t know’.

In highlighting the point made earlier that there is a fine line between encouragement and pressure, Jones *et al* (2004) note that this can sometimes arise out of differences in aspirations between parent and child, thus leading to the parent refusing to provide

support unless their wishes are followed. For the more determined children, they may choose to leave home and work part time; others, however, will give in to their parent's demands. The fact is that most parents want the best for their children and do not wish to see them make the same mistakes as they perhaps they might have done. Jones *et al* (2004) argue that it may be hard to judge the difference between encouragement and pressure. They suggest that 'it may be counter productive to put pressure on young people' but it may also 'be counterproductive for parents to be laissez-faire' as neither approach is helpful in allowing the young person to gain the necessary 'confidence, maturity and experience they need to be able to make decisions on their own' (p.213).

3.6.2 Influence of other family members

There appears to be relatively little research on the influence that siblings have on the career choices and destinations of young people. Here the term sibling is used to refer to biological, half and step siblings. Although not giving great detail, Payne (2003), Foskett and Hesketh (1996) and Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006) have suggested that siblings do have an influence. In highlighting the importance of siblings in each other's lives, Tucker *et al* (1997) point out that siblings play an important role. They write:

Adolescents may want advice from someone with whom they have a long and established relationship, someone who may hold similar values, and someone who can serve as a testing ground for ideas before they are discussed with parents.

(p.64)

One reason for this could be due to the fact that older siblings may have already made important decisions on jobs and education plans. Older siblings are likely to have passed through the stages in school and sometimes may have even made the transfer from school to college or school to work. As these experiences are more recent than those of their parents they could be a more precise source of information than that of parents (Taylor, 1992). Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) similarly have noted that such experiences have caused young people to place a certain amount of credibility in what their older siblings have to say. For some they see this information as being more up to date and thus carrying more weight than advice from their parents.

Altman (1997), however, found in her research that the role of siblings and sibling relationships was one of the most striking themes that emerged. One of the more significant findings was that, very often, siblings emerge as a source of challenge and competition for one another. In some cases even though the challenges posed by siblings were not premeditated, younger children still try to emulate their older siblings but, in so doing, often face 'undue pressure when their siblings excel' (p.234).

Although there is no conclusive evidence that these experiences influence siblings positively or negatively, there is likely to be an impact on career processes in many ways. Altman goes on to point out that 'sibling competition serves a seemingly beneficial role of encouraging one to do one's best, but may also motivate some unwise choices' (p.236).

Beyond the immediate family of parents and siblings there is a general milieu of the extended family which includes grand parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and in some cases very close friends of the parents, or what Law (1981) terms as 'community interaction'. According to Altman (1997) it is members of this extended family who quite often provide positive influences for young people.

3.6.3 Friends and peers

While Payne (2003) contends that young people are more likely to continue in education if their friends intend to stay on, they point out that, according to the literature, young people do not choose a career path simply because their friends have chosen it. Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) support this theory, stating that the young people in their study said while they talked about their choices with friends (over half suggested that they had discussed their options with their friends) they did not simply pick subjects that their friends were doing and 'few located their friends in the centre of their circle of influence' (p.54). At the same time, however, they note that it is a controversial point since their teachers are, on the other hand, claiming that 'they had to work hard to reduce the influence of peer pressure' (*op. cit*, p.54). This therefore suggests that while the majority of young people do not succumb to the influences of their peers in choosing a career path, some do and it may be either positive - in that by seeing their friends doing well others may be influenced to make an effort in order not

to be left behind - or negative, in that conversely, they may be encouraged by friends not to take education seriously.

3.6.4 The influence of schools and teachers

According to Cullingford (2004), many pupils assume that the main reason they attend school is to be prepared for the world of work:

Pupils, from an early age, assume that they are at school in order to be prepared for jobs. They realise that all is geared not just to examinations but to the work that they will be doing later in order to earn money. This should, in itself, boost their positive attitudes and support the endeavours of industrial understanding. Schooling is a temporary rite of passage towards the goal of employment. (p.348)

Therefore it is likely that school, whether through the formal or the hidden curriculum, will have an important effect on career choices. Foskett *et al* (2008) agree, pointing out that throughout a child's school experience, the influence of individuals and of the culture and ethos of the school will shape the choices and preferences that emerge. Metheny *et al* (2008) also suggest that as children and adolescents spent a great deal of time in school, teachers have the potential to be a key source of support.

This influence may not always be well-structured or intentional:

During the long period of schooling teachers influence their students in various ways, intentional and unintentional.

(Ryrie, 1981, pp. 3-4)

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) have shown that much of the careers education provided by teachers takes place via informal, implicit and subliminal messages and in the attitudes and values which they portray rather than the formal and explicit. However, they go on to note that the images which teachers have of careers are often rather dated and based on recognisable stereotypes..

They go on to say that while teachers may have a disproportionate role in influencing the views of young people over significant periods of time 'the accuracy and reliability of that knowledge is questionable' (p.206) and rather limited. They point out that in a previous study (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1999) when teachers were asked to indicate the sources upon which they had relied for information and knowledge about

careers, the emergent pattern was very similar to the models describing how young people currently acquire their ideas (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001, p.196). The main source was found to be friends, followed by personal experience, the media, their own observation of the world of work and direct work experience. Although carried out a number of years ago, the findings are likely to still be relevant today.

Taylor (1992), Hemsley-Brown (1999) and Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) all highlight the academic/vocational imbalance in careers information provided by schools, careers staff and teachers to pupils. They note that, in their study, most of the teachers in were more aware of the existence of graduate entry pathways into nursing engineering and law than of vocational pathways related to NVQs.

More recently, Blenkinsop *et al's* (2006) study of how young people make educational choice at 14 and 16 also raises questions about whether or not teachers have the requisite knowledge to provide the information and guidance needed by young people. Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) note that:

while individual conversations with teachers, whether formal or informal, were generally valued ... young people sometimes placed less credence in the views of subject teachers than in form tutors or senior members of staff.

(p.23)

Blenkinsop *et al* (2006, p.48) also highlight the importance of a teacher's personality in influencing the decisions which students made. They note that students are more likely to choose a subject if they like it and who is teaching it than if they do not. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2008) also see teacher personality as playing a significant role in helping to influence students in schools with 6th forms to stay on at that school rather than leave to attend a college. Otherwise, in the competitive post-16 market commercial pressure to recruit students may mean that the advice students receive may not always be in their best interests:

The intensively competitive environment of further education recruitment means that young people are exposed to the influence of institutional marketing strategies in developing their post-16 choice.

(Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001, p.109)

Thus, it may be concluded that teachers are likely to have an important influence on young people and their career choices, both intentionally and unintentionally.

3.6.5 The influence of careers advisory staff

As Foskett *et al* (2008) point out, the manner in which career guidance is delivered varies from school to school and is not easily generalised. The guidance system has varied much over the years (see Section 3.2). However there are some clear patterns. For example, Foskett *et al* note that research has suggested that young people are more likely to stay in full time education after 16 if they spent Yr 11 in a school with a sixth form. They also point out that students in schools without a sixth form are more likely to be given a more rounded career advice than those in a school with a sixth form. In particular, they found that students in schools with sixth forms were less likely to have a good knowledge of vocational careers.

A review of the literature on careers choice and decision making reveals that careers staff do influence the choices which young people make but they are, however, careful to point out that formal careers education and guidance appears generally to have less influence on choice at 16 than family (see Macrae, Maguire and Ball, 1996; Payne, 2003). This may be due to the fact that for the most part careers staff generally tend to interact with students during their final year at school.

3.6.6 Role models

Drawing on the work of Small and McClean (2002), who suggest that the results from their study ‘corroborates the position that exposure to business owners impacts positively on one’s attitude towards entrepreneurship’ (p.48), it is suggested that having role models is an advantage for career choice and decision making in general. It has already been noted that Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory has suggested that one of the ways in which an individual learns is by observing the behaviour of others and that one of an individual’s very first sources is his or her parents. The applicability of this theory to career choice and decision making has been advocated by Krumboltz, Mitchell and Jones (1976) and Krumboltz (1979) in an attempt ‘to explain how educational and occupational preferences and skills are acquired and how selection of courses, occupations and fields of work are made’ (Krumboltz, 1979, p.19).

According to Scherer *et al* (1989), the key to the modelling process is that an individual is more likely to express a preference for a particular occupation or career if

that individual has observed a model successfully perform activities associated with that career or occupation. However, Krumboltz (1979) also points out that role models can also have a negative influence on individuals:

Children seeing a motion picture depicting police officers as corrupt will be more likely to reject law enforcement as a career than will those seeing a factual documentary on law enforcement.

(p.43)

Therefore, as Scherer *et al* (1989) go on to point out, learning may 'either encourage or discourage a person from entering a career or field similar to the one being observed.

3.6.7 Influence of the media

Since people are portrayed at work by television, films, magazines and even comics (DeFleur, 1964), individuals are able to learn behaviours, values and skills through simple observation (Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1996). With television, internet and other modes of receiving and transmitting information within easy access of most young people, they are exposed to many sources of influence or role models. However, Watson and McMahon (2005) state that despite the recognition of mass media as a possible primary source of children's early occupational learning, there has been little research conducted on the influence of media such as television on children's career development.

Murray (2006) reports in *The Guardian* that a survey carried out by the recruiting firm Office Angels reveals that many young people's careers have been influenced by television programmes such as 'CSI' (Crime Scene Investigation), 'Law and Order', 'Waking the Dead', the BBC MI5 drama 'Spooks' and 'Sex and the City' as well as cookery programmes! It has already been noted that the majority of young people tended to set themselves high aspirations. If the black and white television programmes of the 1960s referred to by DeFleur (1964) were able to expose children to a wide variety of subjects and have an impact on their choices, then it is no surprise that today's high quality colour images of high status careers are proving to be a source of aspiration. Programmes such as 'X Factor' and 'Dancing on Ice' provide opportunities for young people to enter competitions leading to celebrity status. Others such as Formula One racing and Premiership football put them in tune with the thrills and lifestyles of the sporting world.

3.6.8 Influence of society in general

Watson and McMahon (2005) suggest that the influence which society has on career choice and development ‘has been more implied than researched’ (p122). However, as noted by Hodkinson *et al* (1996) and Hemsley-Brown and Foskett (1999), social and cultural relationships cannot be divorced from the activity of career choice and decision-making.

Krumboltz, Mitchell and Jones (1976) have presented a series of propositions and illustrative hypotheses that suggest that the actions, opinions and ideas of individuals in society have direct or indirect influences on the choices and decisions which young people make. They suggest that positive reinforcement is key to generating preferences for given courses of study, occupations or ‘the tasks and consequences of a field of work’ (p.76), while negative reinforcement is likely to bring about rejection.

Law (1993) agrees, arguing that:

...the way in which who-does-what in society is decided is the product of a plurality of interpersonal transactions conducted in local settings, and on the basis of interaction within and between groups of which the individual is a member – the community.

(p.215)

In other words by interacting with others each individual ‘constructs a constantly changing series of representations of self and situation’ (Law, 1993, p.222).

3.6.9 Perceptions of the status of employment

Citing research from the CAPDEM Project (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1997) which they undertook into young people’s perceptions of specific careers at 11, 15 and 17 years of age, Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) argue that evidence from their study suggests that the ideas, perceptions and images which form young people’s aspirations are developed over a period of time, beginning in the early stages of their personal development and not just during their teenage years. This allows occupations and career intentions to be chosen at an early age. They therefore suggest that the present structure, which leaves careers education and guidance till the latter years of secondary school may result in ‘the important stages of conceptual development and choice’ being missed.

In looking at the career perceptions and ambitions of young people, Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1997; 1999) have sought to categorize young people's choices of careers into three groups based on their intrinsic characteristics. These were termed 'lottery jobs', 'high status jobs' and 'customary jobs'.

They describe 'lottery jobs' as being 'high profile jobs, frequently attracting high salaries, but with very limited opportunity for entry'. They note that success in gaining entry into these types of jobs is dependent on 'possessing specialised talent or ability' along with the chance of being spotted. This category includes such jobs as professional sports persons, actors or actresses and music artists. The odds of securing a job is akin to winning the lottery; it has high odds stacked against it (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown 2001, pp.182-183).

High status jobs they define as jobs 'which are typically professional careers such as doctor, dentist, or barrister. The attraction to such jobs is their potentially high earnings and the status which goes with the position. However, entry to these roles requires high academic qualifications followed by long periods of training.

Customary jobs they define as jobs 'which are available in large numbers within the labour market'. They point out that such jobs provided employment for three quarters of the parents of the young people in the study' (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown 2001, p.183). These three categories provide an alternative way of looking at perceptions of job status to that of the academic versus vocational.

In their study of factors which impact on the choice of entrepreneurship as a career by Barbadian youths, Small and McClean (2002) report that while 'the majority (33.6%) had the greatest preference for the professions (doctors, lawyer, architect, engineer, etc.)' only '(6.0%) chose the acquisition of a trade' (p.40). Such findings will be equally important when examining the preferences of the young people in this study. Another way of looking at how young people are influenced is in terms of which job pays more (Blenkinsop *et al*, 2006). This reflects the economic model referred to by Payne (2003). Research on the influence of socio economic factors on education commonly notes that those with more money are able to pick and choose where they want to go or what they want to study more easily than those who are less well off.

While Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) may note that only a very small number of students actually indicated money as a source of influence, this does not indicate that they were not actually influenced by this.

3.7 Summary

The transitions young people make through school and after leaving school are of constant concern in the world of education. Invariably young people have to make complex choices between the ages of 14 and 19 of what subjects to take, and what career routes to follow. Access to careers education and guidance and the role that it has played has been variable and there have been a number of different initiatives.

Researchers have developed a number of theories that attempt to describe how young people make their subject and career choices, and the factors that influence them.

Payne (2003) summarised these, showing that three main strategies are commonly used: the Economic, Structuralist and Pragmatic rationality. These decision-making models have been particularly influential in looking at how choices are made:

- The *economic* model suggests that young people make rational choices based on perceived economic benefits which they expect to gain from investing in education and training.
- The *structuralist* model is one in which choices are made as a result of constraints over which young people have no control, or by long-standing assumptions that they held.
- The *pragmatic rationality* model was proposed by Hodkinson *et al* (1996) and has been further developed by Maguire *et al* (2000). It assumes that decisions are made through the perceptions and experiences of the individual – a rational process that takes into account the individual's family and social circumstances.

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown's (2001) model of choice and decision making in education and training is also useful, in that it considers four factors that come into play when decisions are being made. It is a combination of Hodkinson *et al*'s pragmatic rationality model and Maguire *et al*'s further development of the model. The model highlights the interrelationship of four areas concerned with choice and decision making:

- Context (family, social, cultural, institutional, geographical location)
- Choice influencers (media, teachers, parents, peers and others)
- Choosers (the individual and/or the parent)
- Choice (the job or career)

This model will be used as the overarching framework of this study because of the way in which it captures the complex multilayered nature of the choice and decision-making process.

Also of relevance is White's (2007) model of decision making behaviour, which describes the way in which decisions are taken:

- Inclusive – the positive selection of an outcome, or the desire to take that action
- Exclusive – starts with outcomes that are not wanted or are to be avoided
- Default – where there is no engagement in the decision.

Aspirations play a central role in shaping the way in which young people make the transition from school to work. Aspirations develop during the early years of young people's lives and may continue through schooling and become a reality or may change. Occupational aspirations tend to be influenced by local labour markets. However, there appears to be a hierarchy in the way in which subjects and careers are viewed with some being viewed as inferior to others. Young people's career aspirations have been categorised as lottery jobs, high status jobs and customary jobs (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1999). While few succeed in obtaining lottery jobs, as they are scarce and require specific talents and abilities, many aspire towards high status (or professional) jobs which pay well but require high academic ability. Nonetheless, customary jobs are a major source of employment for the vast majority.

Young people's career decisions are influenced by many factors and come from several sources. These include:

- Parents
- Siblings and other relatives
- Friends and peers
- Schools and teachers
- Careers advisors
- Role models
- The media
- Society in general
- Perceptions of employment status

There is a notion that the social economic status of young people's parents plays a significant role in shaping the way in which they view their academic abilities and their ambition to succeed in life. Parents have a powerful but ambiguous influence over young people. Siblings can have a considerable impact on influencing the decisions that younger siblings make, especially in cases where the older siblings have completed the course or subject or have had some other personal experience. Friends and peers can be a positive as well as a negative influence.

3.7.1 Theoretical framework

To summarise, there are three main theories that arise from the literature that are particularly relevant to this study. These are:

1. Payne's (2003) description of the decision making process as *economic, structuralist or pragmatic rationality*.
2. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown's (2001) model of choice and decision making – *context, choice influencers, choosers and choice*.
3. White's (2007) model of types of choice - *inclusive, exclusive and default*.

These will be used as part of the theoretical framework in which the findings of this study will be discussed.

In addition, career aspirations, and the influence of individuals and other factors also play an important role in the decision making process, and these will be examined in the light of data from the interviews.

These factors will form the theoretical framework of the study, together with the main issues already identified in Chapter Two:

1. There is a lack of understanding of what the term 'vocational' means.
2. Vocational courses and qualifications do not carry the same apparent value as academic courses and qualifications.
3. There is a perception that the more qualifications one attains, the better the job one is likely to get and the better will be the pay.

Chapter Four

METHODOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology utilised in undertaking this study. It starts out by setting out the research aims and general perspectives which provided the basis for the choice of methodology. It then goes on to discuss the context in which the research took place and those who took part in it. Next, the data collection methods and methods of analysis utilised are explained and as no research is without its difficulties, the dilemmas and ethical issues faced in undertaking this study are also discussed. The issue of the originality of the study is also addressed.

The need to establish an element of transparency to the encounters and various perspectives of the interviewees has been a decisive factor in choosing the research design. The affirmation of the trustworthiness of the study, coupled with an investigation driven by personal motivation in the research concludes the chapter.

4.2 Research aims

The study was located within the socio-economic context of Vocational Education and Training and addressed the following three central aims:

1. To explore young peoples' employment aspirations in Antigua and the UK.
2. To investigate young people's attitudes towards jobs and careers.
3. To evaluate the various influences on their career choices.

4.3 The general perspective

Verma and Mallick (1999) state that:

...perspectives reflect the way in which particular research topics are addressed.

(p.21)

As this study is concerned with understanding the way in which young people at school/college think about schooling in relation to their future, and in a sense therefore concerned with uncovering young peoples' perceptions of vocational education and training, it can be said to employ an interpretive perspective in which the researcher interprets what the young people have said in answering the questions posed to them in either the questionnaires or the interviews. According to Bassey (1999) interpretive researchers believe that the purpose of research 'is to describe and interpret the phenomenon of the world in attempt to get shared meanings with others' (p.14). He sees interpretation as 'a search for deep perspectives on particular events and for theoretical insights' but warns against its usefulness in determining 'the outcome of future events' (p.14). The theoretical perspective of the interpretivist approach is that it 'looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life world' (Crotty, 1998, p.67). Thus, the aim of the researcher 'is to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights into situations e.g. schools, classrooms' (Wellington, 2000, p.16).

Bassey highlights the possibility of two individuals having different outlooks on the same scenario when he states:

The interpretive researcher considers that the rationality of one observer may not be the same as the rationality of another, and so accepts that when these two observers talk to each other the world may not seem 'rational' and make sense.

(Bassey, 1999, p.13)

The objective in this study is to seek to define more clearly the fundamental reasons for the choices and decisions made by the interviewees in a way which enhances the quality of the research outcome. The data collection methods utilised were in the form of self completed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The data drawn from each stage was used to formulate and develop questions for the next stage as well as develop the background for the more general issues that are raised in the study.

It was therefore important to capture the individual ways in which these young people saw the world and the way in which they socially constructed that world in relation to how they chose their school subjects and/or future careers. Thus, the study was designed in an effort to explore as fully as possible the thoughts, feelings and opinions of a number of students in school and college. Parts of the research are therefore reflective in that students were asked at times to reflect back on aspects of their lives and on schooling in terms of choices, consequences and or influences.

Hodkinson (1998, p.563) posits that ‘all knowledge is interpretation, for each of us has to interpret anything we sense before it becomes knowledge for us’. As researchers we construct interpretations of the data we collect (Crotty, 1998 p.42). While it is not possible to guarantee that the responses which research participants give are the truth and not simply responses intended to please the researcher, as Peshkin (2001) suggests:

We display respect to our research others by taking seriously what they say, what they think they are doing, what they make of things. In this way, we communicate that we have not come with preconceived notions of the type that preclude careful serious listening.

(p244)

To address this issue within this study, the interviewees were advised that there were no right or wrong answers and that they should respond with what they thought or believed, as it was their views that the researcher was interested in. This was done so as to avoid biasing the interviewee with any preconceived ideas or notions. For as noted by Bassey (1999):

Interpretive researchers recognise that by asking questions or by observing they may change the situation which they are studying. They recognise themselves as potential variables in the enquiry and so in writing reports may use personal pronouns.

(p.13)

Also, in order to maintain what Fontana and Frey (1994, p.660) refer to as ‘a sharedness of meaning’ the researcher tried as best as possible to use words and phrases commonly used by the young people themselves. For example in the UK, when referring to intelligent children, the term ‘swot’ was used.

4.4 Research context

This research explores why and how young people make choices and decisions regarding the subjects they take and the careers they choose. It also explores the various influences which may lead to certain choices rather than others.

The study took place within two non-selective comprehensive schools and two FE Colleges in the North of England and two government secondary schools and a community college in the Eastern Caribbean island of Antigua. For the purposes of confidentiality the two Antiguan schools will be referred to as School A and School B and the college as College C while the UK schools will be referred to as School D and School E and the colleges as College F and College G.

Although the study has been conducted in two different countries and inevitably makes comparisons between them it does not purport to be a formal piece of comparative research. It may therefore be more useful to see the study as identifying common factors in career choice and aspirations generally. It therefore uses these two countries as examples in order to make sure that the points made are not just specific to any one country. Therefore, looking at the attitudes in two different places helps to identify not only culturally specific issues but also more universal issues.

4.5 Research participants

The research participants in the case of the UK schools were year 10 and 11 students and the equivalents in Antigua were 4th and 5th form students. While the students in British school system moved through the various years based on the age of the students, the students in Antigua were promoted on merit therefore classes could be of mixed aged students.

The college participants in the case of the UK were FE students pursuing level 1 and level 2 business courses in both colleges and catering in one and IT in the other, while those in Antigua were at a community college pursuing first year Automotive, Construction and Business courses.

Part of this study examines students' perceptions towards Vocational Education and Training. The debate on vocational education and training is definitely an ongoing part

of the British and Caribbean education territories and while this sample may not be representative of the entire populations, it provides an insight into how some of the young people in two schools and two colleges in the counties involved view vocational education.

4.6 Research methods

Verma and Beard (1981, pp.16-17) have noted that while the term research can have different meanings there is a general agreement that ‘systematic enquiry’ constitutes its general nature. However, they go on to suggest that simply being systematic is not enough. The investigation must go deeper into existing knowledge. Bassey (1999, p.2) also supports the notion of research being systematic but adds that it is ‘critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge’.

It therefore follows, as pointed out by Yates (2004):

Education research is an arena where some interaction between 'insider' and 'outsider', and semi-insider and semi-outsider, perspectives is an ongoing part of the territory.

(p.49)

When one wishes to find out what someone else thinks about something, the easiest method is to ask them. The way, however, in which this asking is undertaken, will determine the quality of the response. Indeed, as pointed out by Yates (2004), with respect to research one needs to have a sense of what makes this contribution different from simply bumping into someone and asking them the same question. In defining research many tend to view it as being either quantitative or qualitative. However, it is argued that if there is one thing that is common to all research, no matter the framework, is its thorough, systematic search for valid, reliable and meaningful knowledge (Verma and Mallick, 1999) (but see Stronach, 1989; Stronach *et al*, 2007 who seem to suggest that research at times is manipulated to suit a particular agenda). Thus, two of the most important aspects of any research methodology will be how well it achieves what it has set out to do (its validity) and how possible it would be to achieve the same results if it was done again (its reliability).

4.6.1 Trustworthiness of the study

Wellington (2000) posits that the terms validity and reliability ‘have been widely used in describing research, not least educational research’ (p.29). He goes on to define validity as referring ‘to the degree to which a method, a test or a research tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure’ (p.30) and reliability as ‘a judgement of the extent to which a test, a method or a tool gives constant results across a range of settings and if used by a range of researchers’ (p.31). Nonetheless, it has been argued that there are differing views of the concepts of validity and reliability among qualitative researchers some of whom regard these quantitative terms as being inadequate or irrelevant for qualitative research and have therefore sought to substitute other terms for validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) pose a very important question when they ask:

How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue?
(p.290)

They contend that conventional researchers have therefore sought to use four criteria in answering these questions of their research (‘truth value’, ‘applicability’, ‘consistency’, and ‘neutrality’; which have since evolved into ‘internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity’). In contesting these terms they note that:

...it is precisely on the point of trustworthiness that the naturalistic investigator is most often attacked ... It therefore becomes of utmost importance that (1) the inappropriateness of the conventional criteria be well demonstrated, and (2) acceptable alternative criteria be proposed and their use defended.

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.294)

They therefore propose the following substitutions:

1. Truth value to be substituted with credibility
2. Applicability to be substituted with transferability
3. Consistency to be substituted with dependability
4. Neutrality to be substituted with auditing

Wolcott (1994) is one such researcher who is unconvinced of the use of the term ‘validity’ being used in qualitative data, since ‘the essence of validity ... asks whether one is measuring whatever it is that is supposed to be measured’ (p.343). He instead

suggests that ‘understanding’ may be a more suitable term. He believes that the clear choice of objective should be a quality which is aimed at identifying critical elements and extracting plausible information from them, not necessarily ‘finding the right or ultimate answer’ (pp.366-367).

Maxwell’s (1992, p.281) realist approach to validity ‘sees the validity of an account as inherent, not in the procedures used to produce and validate it, but in its relationship to those things that it is intended to be an account of’ and brings him in ‘basic agreement with the main point of Wolcott’s critique ... that understanding is a more fundamental concept for qualitative research than validity’. He further goes on to point out that he wishes to ‘avoid applying or adapting the typologies developed for experimental and quantitative research’ as ‘these typologies cannot be applied directly to qualitative research without distorting what qualitative researchers actually do in addressing validity issues and tautologically confirming quantitative researchers’ critiques. Maxwell therefore outlines what he views as being ‘five broad categories of understanding that are relevant to qualitative research, and five corresponding types of validity that concern qualitative researchers. However, it will be noted that these categories (‘internal validity’, ‘external validity’, reliability and ‘objectivity’) have retained the potentially problematic and contentious terms of validity and reliability.

Erlanson *et al* (1993, p.131) point out that qualitative studies are usually accused of ‘sloppy research and subjective observations’ and therefore need to pay strict attention to the issue of trustworthiness and communicate to the reader that the study is worthy of attention.

In addressing this issue of trustworthiness in this study the four criteria proposed for use in qualitative research (‘credibility’, ‘transferability’, ‘dependability’ and ‘confirmability’) by Lincoln and Guba (1985) have been adopted. Credibility refers to the way in which the research findings appropriately represent the realities and views which the research participants have expressed during the data collection; transferability refers to the degree to which the research findings can be applied to another setting; dependability refers to the criterion of consistency (Erlanson *et al*, 1993); and confirmability refers to the ability to track the data collected to their sources and corroborate the findings.

One method of ensuring credibility is through the use of a process known as ‘peer debriefing’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p.237). In adapting the use of this process to this study through seminar presentations, discussions were held and feedback obtained from colleagues during the design and analysis stages. A student conference paper (Swift, 2006) was also presented at BERA’s Annual Conference in September 2005, which once again allowed for discussion and feedback on the initial analysis presented. During the initial analysis of the interviews, as described later in the analysis section, supervisors were also given sample transcripts to code which were then compared to those of the researcher so as to ensure that personal biases were reduced to an absolute minimum. While it has been suggested by Erlandson *et al* (1993, p.141) that ‘a member of one’s doctoral committee should not be the peer debriefer because he or she is an authority relationship with the researcher, it should be acknowledged that the supervisors of this study played a very important function throughout the entire process in providing valuable support and helping to vent frustrations by ‘exposing the researcher to searching questions’ and sometimes by ‘playing the devil’s advocate’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.308). At each stage of the peer debriefing process these probing questions were asked, not as a means of changing ideas or positions but rather as a means of helping the researcher to examine the phenomena from various perspectives. Several other individuals have also provided a source of constant feedback including university teaching staff and the researcher’s wife (having taught in Antigua albeit at the primary level).

Other methods which are widely recommended for ensuring credibility are ‘prolonged engagement’ and ‘member checking’. As the name implies prolonged engagement requires the researcher to spend an extended period of time carrying out the field work and spending time with the participants. However, due to the time constraints of this study this method was not suitable. In the member checking process, participants are asked to provide feedback on the analysis. However, this too was not seen to be practical as getting in touch with participants after the analysis would have proved to be immensely difficult if not virtually impossible as most would have left the institution by the time the analysis was completed.

As ‘transferability’ is concerned with the degree to which the findings are applicable to other contexts, this study has presented a precise, detailed description of the research setting, participants, the data collection and analysis methods and procedures. The

study has in effect presented the actual voices of its participants through the use of direct quotations which are meant to give the reader a feeling of being placed ‘vicariously’ (Erlandson *et al*, 1993, p.33) within the actual setting. Such thick description should enable anyone wishing to apply their findings within a similar context ‘to make tentative judgements about the applicability of certain observations for their contexts and to form working hypotheses to guide empirical inquiry in those contexts’ (Erlandson *et al*, 1993, p.33).

Dependability seeks to provide an audit trail through which others are able to ‘examine the inquirer’s documentation of data, methods, decisions and end product’ (Tobin and Begley, 2004, p.392). Therefore, copies of letters and emails to and from the various institutions were kept along with copies of the completed questionnaires, the recorded interviews, transcripts and any other relevant documents.

In an effort to provide confirmability extended discussions were held with the supervisory team at all stages of the design, execution, analysis and writing up with the researcher presenting accounts of progress of the study. As two of the supervisors are experienced practitioners in the field of research and one very experienced in the area of career guidance, their scrutiny served to ensure that the ‘data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination, but are clearly derived from the data’ (Tobin and Begley, 2004, p.392).

4.6.2 Quantitative versus qualitative research

As has been noted previously, the methods used to carry out research can usually be described as being either quantitative or qualitative. Over the years there has been a long running debate over the value of quantitative research methods versus that of qualitative research methods (Hammersley, 1996). The early debates surrounding the distinction between the two methods tended to see each being placed at two opposite ends of a continuum (Swann and Pratt, 2003; Opie and Sikes, 2004), where at one end quantitative research is seen to be aligned with a positivistic or scientific approach and at the other, qualitative is seen to be aligned with an anti-positivistic or non-scientific approach. Babbie (2004, p.26), however, notes that in social research the distinction ‘is essentially ... between numerical and nonnumerical (sic) data’. He goes on to point out

that through its numerical nature quantitative data has the advantage over qualitative data of providing some measure of quality, however, on the other hand it also has the disadvantage of ‘a potential loss of meaning’ (p.26).

Verma and Mallick (1999), in providing definitions for both quantitative and qualitative research state:

Quantitative as its name suggests refers to any approach to data collection where the aim is to gather information that can be quantified; that is to say it can be counted or measured in some form or another.
(p.26)

Qualitative, on the other hand, is an approach to evidence gathering which although disciplined relies less on scales and scores. Typically, it involves the gathering of evidence that reflects the experiences, feelings or judgements of individuals taking part in the investigation of a research problem or issue whether as subjects or as observers of the scene.
(p.27)

Elliott *et al* (1999) note that ‘good qualitative research is demanding and time consuming, often more so than good quantitative research’ (p.217). Both Pratt (2003) and Silverman (2005) insist that choosing whether to use quantitative and qualitative methods ‘should not be predetermined’ (Silverman, 2005, p.6) but rather should be ‘contingent upon the issues being examined and the kinds of evidence that would best serve to test the policy/theory’. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) point out that the use of quantitative research has been severely critiqued by many researchers. Some of them highlight major drawbacks of the quantitative research techniques while others focus on the issues surrounding an overemphasis on measuring data as opposed to focusing on the interpretation and meaning of the data.

In the conduct of this research both questionnaires and interviews were utilised as methods for the collection of data. This included in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 84 young people who were asked to reflect on their educational experiences. These young people, through a flexibly structured interview schedule, were asked to recount aspects of their education in respect of the choices and decisions they made. These semi-structured interviews formed the major data collection process of the study.

The quantitative method was used as an exploratory tool to ascertain the young people's perceptions of education and training. The use of qualitative methods offers the opportunity to gain insights that simply would not be available to those relying exclusively on a quantitative approach, but that is not to say that data generated using quantitative methods is of no value.

In Chapter 3 the complex nature of choice and decision making has already been discussed, thus following Hatch (2002), who asserts that qualitative work starts with the assumption that social settings are unique dynamic and complex. A qualitative approach was chosen to systematically examine the perceptions and understandings of the choices participants made in regard to choice of subjects or career paths. This is in keeping with Elliott *et al* (1999) when they say that:

The aim of qualitative research is to understand and represent the experiences and actions of people as they encounter, engage and live through situations. In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to develop understandings of the phenomena under study based as much as possible on the perspectives of those being studied.

(Elliott, *et al*, 1999, p.216)

4.7 Data collection

4.7.1 Questionnaires

The initial stage of the data collection was conducted within the two UK secondary schools where 30 questionnaires were administered among one of the year 10 groups and 30 among one of the year 11 groups in each school. The aim was to determine how school students view and make sense of the different pathways towards a vocational or academic career goal. Opie and Sikes (2004, p.95) argue that 'the questionnaire is the most widely used procedure for obtaining information'. They point out that it has ease of reaching distant respondents, standardized question approach, anonymity, and the ability of questions being written for a specific purpose. However, Bell (2005, p.14) warns that while it is useful for finding out 'what, where, when and how', it is poor for finding out 'why'. Borg and Gall (1989, p.427), in speaking of the importance of taking time to develop one's questionnaire, have also stated that the rushed approach to questionnaire development by some researchers has given many school staff a negative view of questionnaires as a research method, to the extent that some quickly dispatch the questionnaires they receive to the waste paper basket. Being attentive to this

concern and to avoid such an occurrence, the questionnaires were developed with the intention of providing salience both for the respondents and the research questions.

In the literature it has been suggested by writers such as Finegold and Soskice (1988) and Wolf (2002) that young people seem reluctant to venture into vocational courses and that one of the reasons for this was that vocational subjects have been viewed as lacking in value. Thus the initial focus of this study was on determining young people's perceptions of education and training as preparation for employment and their employment aspirations. The questionnaire therefore sought to elicit data to help find out if the students in this study viewed vocational subjects as lacking in value, and if so, by whom and why? It has been suggested by Bathmaker (2001) and Ecclestone (2002) that vocational qualifications are viewed as second best by a number of the students whom they interviewed. This study is intended to determine if this is still the case. The questionnaire began with questions as about the individual's gender and family background (including ethnicity, parents' employment status and current occupation); their educational experience (for school questionnaires- expected subjects and grades; for college questionnaires – achieved subjects and grades); likes and dislikes at school; future plans (educational and career); views of what was important in gaining employment; what they saw as being the main purpose of school; whether or not they planned on going to university; and perceptions of vocational and academic careers.

The questionnaires are presented in Appendices 1a to 1d.

In order to encourage completion, the questionnaires had to be kept to within a reasonable length as well as to sustain student interest. Thus, the target was to keep the questionnaire booklet to a minimum of ten pages having questions which were phrased using simple short sentences. Also, as Oppenheim (1992) noted that 'questionnaires do not emerge fully fledged' and must be 'fashioned and developed to full maturity', a considerable amount of time was taken in brainstorming and developing the questionnaires used. Unnecessary questions were removed and ambiguous questions reworded. In noting the tedious but critical nature of questionnaire design, and at the same time ensuring content validity, each question was reviewed with a critical view as to whether it produced the necessary type of data that the aims sought to unearth.

At the beginning of each questionnaire completion session the students were briefed by the researcher as to the purpose of the questionnaire. In doing so it was pointed out that, from time to time, various policy changes are made with regards to education and it is apparent to the researcher, from reading various literature on education and training, that little attempt has been made to find out what the young people's views are regarding education and training and its relationship with the world of work and in particular that of vocational education. The students were further informed that it was their view that the researcher was interested in and as such was asking them to work independently on the questionnaire. The researcher then assured them that the data which they were about to provide would be treated with the utmost anonymity and confidentiality. To this regard the researcher told the students that whatever information was provided was between them and him and that neither teacher, parent or any other party could acquire the information provided by them.

During the main phase of the study, questionnaires were completed by 385 young people. Table 4.1 shows a breakdown of how they were distributed.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire distribution

Antigua		UK	
Institution	No. of Questionnaires	Institution	No. of Questionnaires
Schools		Schools	
School A	63	School D	45
School B	64	School E	37
Schools Total	127	Schools Total	82
College		College	
College C	61	College F	49
		College G	66
College Total	61	Colleges Total	115
Antigua Total	188	UK Total	197
Overall Questionnaires = 385			

4.7.2 Interviews

Interviews are usually used by researchers 'to investigate and prompt things that we cannot observe' such as 'thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings and perspectives' (Wellington, 2000, p.71). In this study interviews were used to elicit the perceptions of the young people and their understanding of the various education and

training options and pathways available to them, together with their reasons for making certain choices. While the questionnaire provided some answers as to the young people's perceptions of education and training, this study was not only about understanding the young people's perceptions, but also how these perceptions had developed. It was not possible to design the questionnaire to answer such questions and so the interviews were used to fill in the gaps and go deeper in understanding the young people's perceptions as well as their aspirations and where the influences for such aspirations came from.

Both school and college interviews began by asking the interviewee to tell the researcher 'a little bit' about themselves and, where not divulged, probing questions were asked about their social status of their family, their parents' occupations and if they had any siblings. In the case of the school interviews, they went on to ask questions relating to school experience and the sorts of subjects and grades which students were expecting to achieve. The interview schedule then went on to ask what participants were planning to do when they left school, why they wanted to do it and what or who influenced them in making such choices. Questions were also asked regarding their views of various occupations and the way in which they felt that society in general viewed these. Participants were also questioned regarding their understanding of the terms 'academic' and 'vocational' and were asked to comment on the amount of information which they were given in school about both academic and vocational careers.

The college students were asked similar questions, but with the addition of looking retrospectively on their school experience and the subjects and grades which they left school with, as well as why they had chosen to go to college and why they had gone into the particular course which they were doing.

Appendices 2a to 2d provide examples of the interview schedules used.

Individual interviews as opposed to group interviews were chosen so that students would not feel the need to be too guarded in their responses to the questions posed, or be disinclined to communicate freely, as well as to prevent the response of one student influencing the responses of others. Further understanding into the development of individuals' vocational aspirations may have been gained by interviewing the parents

of these students or other sources of influence. However geographical and time constraints rendered this option impracticable.

In a bid to encourage students to talk freely it was decided that the interviews should take place in a quiet room without any interruptions. Schools and colleges were asked to provide a room free of disturbances in which the interviews could take place. For the most part, either the Principal's or Head of Department's office was made available. Generally there were few interruptions and students were able to speak freely.

In the case of Antigua, permission to conduct the interviews was gained initially by telephone calls to the Principals of the two schools chosen, followed by a letter sent as an attachment by e-mail, while permission to conduct the college interviews was sought in writing by a letter sent via email to the relevant Principals.

In the case of the UK permission was sought initially via telephone calls made to the Head Teachers of the schools and the relevant Heads of Department in the colleges chosen. These were followed up by a letter seeking permission. Appendix 4 shows a sample copy, exclusive of the names and address details (due to confidentiality). All participants were assured that the interviews would be treated with the strictest of confidentiality.

Eighty four interviews were conducted in total. Table 4.2 displays a breakdown of how they were distributed.

Table 4.2 Distribution of interviews

Antigua		UK	
Institution	No. of Interviews	Institution	No. of Interviews
Schools		Schools	
School A	10	School D	10
School B	10	School E	10
Schools Total	20	Schools Total	20
College		Colleges	
College C	17	College F	11
		College G	16
College Total		Colleges Total	27
Antigua Total	37	UK Total	47

Overall Interviews = 84			

The technique used to conduct the interviews was what Powney and Watts (1987) have referred to as ‘respondent’ as opposed to that which they term ‘informant’ interviewing. This means that, despite the researcher demonstrating both flexibility and sensitivity to the participant, the researcher largely directs the interview. This is more widely known as a ‘semi-structured interview’ described by Robson (1993) in the following terms:

... the interviewer has worked out a set of questions in advance, but is free to modify their order based upon her perception of what seems most appropriate in the conversation of the ‘conversation’ can change the way they are worded, give explanations, leave out particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee or include additional ones...

(p.231)

Both Silverman (1993) and Miller and Glassner (2000) have also been an invaluable source of help in the development of the methodology of this study. Silverman has argued that in interviews ‘the primary issue is to generate data which gives an authentic insight into peoples’ experiences’ (p.9). Miller and Glassner (2000) have argued that it is possible for well designed research to provide valid and valuable information from participants who construct ‘not just narratives but social worlds’ (p.126).

They continue:

Those of us who aim to understand and document others’ understandings choose qualitative interviewing because it provides us with a means for exploring the points of view of our own research subjects, while granting these points of view the culturally honoured status of reality.

(p.127)

While Popper (1968) argues that in a research situation having established ideas is unavoidable, Hughes (2005) intimates that one should have presumptions about a phenomenon if one is going to study it. However, in conducting the interviews it was felt important that the views of the researcher were not expressed in order to avoid influencing the interviewee.

It was believed that the use of a series of in-depth semi-structured rather than structured interviews would allow for a certain degree of structure while allowing sufficient flexibility for young people to offer narratives of their views and perceptions which could be elaborated, interpreted and contextualised. An in-depth evaluation of these interviews could be undertaken to identify similarities in the views and perceptions of the interviewee and also any trends among the cohorts. For this reason, this aspect of the study was based on general conclusions derived from particular facts and was data driven. This semi-structured approach was chosen as, by employing qualitative modes of inquiry, it allowed the data that were collected to be analysed in a systematic way which was necessary to identify consistency of the themes which could be debated and extended.

All interviews were recorded using a minidisk recorder. The recordings were then saved on to computer using the program 'Audacity'.

Transcriptions were then performed using the programme 'Express Scribe' in conjunction with the programme Word. The combination allowed listening to, rewinding and stopping of the recorded interviews to be performed while viewing and typing in the word page through the use of the function keys on the computer keyboard.

4.7.3 The pilot study

Using the first versions of the questionnaire and the interview schedule, a pilot study was carried out in a non selective comprehensive school in the North of England. Although the school was selected mainly due to convenience, it was also noted that its student base was statistically representative of the community which it served. Upon completion of the initial design, the school questionnaire was piloted among a set of year 10 students (25) and a set of year 11 students (24).

The college questionnaire was piloted using 5 students who attended 2 different colleges which did not take part in the main study. These students were randomly chosen from within the local community.

The results of both pilot studies strongly suggested that the questionnaires were pitched at an appropriate level for the students and were completed independently

within approximately 25 minutes by most participants. The pilot study was partly undertaken to test the internal reliability of the data collection instruments being used.

Following the completion of the questionnaire, participants were asked to make comments about the clarity of the questions and the requirements of the questionnaire generally. These few comments and further analysis by the author and supervisor led to a small number of changes – typically the addition of categories and clarification or changing of vocabulary or instructions.

Students were then asked if they would like to volunteer to take part in the interview process which would take place on a later occasion. This proved enlightening as a number of students eagerly volunteered to take part.

4.8 Data analysis

In an attempt to elucidate valid and reliable findings from the data collected, the qualitative and quantitative data were analysed separately, then they were integrated and analysed again. The questionnaires were analysed using the SPSS computer programme while the interviews were analysed using the method described below.

Wellington (2000), while acknowledging Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) suggestion that there are more than one way in which to make sense of qualitative data, offers a six stage approach. A simplified version of this approach has been adopted here with just three stages. The first step was to get immersed in the data by listening to the recorded interviews and reading and re-reading each transcript.

An interpretive approach was used to analyse the data. This initially involved listening to the interview recordings which made it possible to relive the interviews while at the same time allowing for the content of 10 individual transcripts (at least two randomly chosen from each UK institution as these were the first to be transcribed) to be analysed. The subsequent ideas and concepts which emerged were then grouped together as themes through progressive focusing.

Using the themes which emerged, an in-depth analysis of all transcripts was performed. Using colour-coding, these themes were marked alongside the appropriate

sections of each transcript. This involved reading and re-reading each transcript over and over numerous times and trying to ensure that all interpretations are valid and supported by unambiguous evidence. This reading of the data over and over is stated by Hatch (2002, p.181) as ‘the only way to be immersed at the level required’. As the various themes come to the fore, those which are relevant, logical and conclusive are retained whereas those which are somewhat ambiguous are eliminated. It should be noted however, that within the rejected group of transcripts there is a small number from which particular salient features do emerge. Initially each transcript is perused, noted and then grouped. Once this was done then it was possible to look at a number of transcripts together. At this stage similar themes are classified and grouped. These groups are then used to form the basis of dominant themes. The ultimate aim of the analysis is to produce a set of themes which are believed to capture the essence of the transcripts and how participants experience the phenomenon in question (Willig, 2001).

The second step was to decontextualise the data by taking it apart and categorising it into different themes. Peshkin (2001) posits that:

In any form of qualitative research, inseparability is inescapable: Things are connected. We wrench them from their contexts, knowing that we do a disservice to their natural interrelatedness; we must do this if we are not to be paralysed by the immense complexity of the world of social phenomena.

(p.247)

The noting of similarities and differences both between the transcripts of different students and between statements made by individuals is critical at this point.

The third step involved recontextualising the data and realigning it against the data obtained from the literature review and the theoretical framework of this study.

4.8.1 The use of narrative

According to Abbott (2002, p.1) ‘when we think of narratives, we usually think of it as art, however modest’. Sarbin (1986, p.8) contends that ‘human beings think, perceive, imagine and make moral choices according to narrative structures’. He maintains that if ‘two or three pictures or descriptive phrases’ are presented to an individual, ‘he or

she will connect them to form a story, an account that relate the pictures or the meaning of the phrases in some way'. Polkinghorne (1995) notes that there has been a rise in the attention paid to narrative inquiry by researchers due to its 'linguistic form being suited to displaying human existence' (p.5). He describes narratives as being able to bring together 'diverse events, happenings and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal directed processes'.

In discussing narrative configurations Polkinghorne (1995, p.5) uses the term narrative to refer 'specifically to texts that are thematically organized by plots'. However, he points out that the use of the term narrative is not restricted to this meaning; rather, this term especially as it relates to qualitative research literature has various connotations.

Polkinghorne (1995, p.6) divides research data into these basic forms, namely short answer, numerical, and narrative. He notes that while 'qualitative research can use all three forms of data, it is primarily characterized by its use of data in narrative form'.

Another way of looking at the data is to consider that each interview was conducted as a 'talk to some purpose' (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989, p.79) in which a story is told. The way in which the young people who were interviewed went about making their various choices, their perceptions of education in relation to their futures and the various influences which guided this choice form a narrative (a story) of each individual and collectively shed light on the bigger picture. It tells a story of what was happening or imagined to be happening to various young people at an important stage in their education in Antigua and the UK. Each of these narratives tells a story about the individual. Many of these narratives tell of the lives of students in school and or college. They tell of the constraints which the students had to work under and the joys they experienced in education as a whole or in particular subjects. These narratives tell stories which could not be garnered by questionnaires. They give intricate detail as to why some students chose certain subjects or career paths rather than others. They provide insights into the lives of each particular student and thus provide a deeper understanding of the young person's perceptions, thoughts and feelings by placing them into context.

The interviews which were conducted in this study may also be viewed as what Flick (2006) calls 'episodic interviews'. Flick (2006, p.182) argues that 'the central element

of this form of interview is that you recurrently ask the interviewee to present narratives of certain situations. He notes that with 'episodic interviews, you try to employ the advantages of both the narrative interview and the semi-structured interview' (p.185). He however, also notes, that one of the drawbacks with narrative interviews is that not everyone is comfortable or competent at presenting narratives. Such can be said to be the case with the interviewees in this study, as while there were some students who felt quite comfortable and needed little probing, there were others who required repeated encouragement and probing.

4.9 Ethical considerations in the research

In the conduct of this study there were a few dilemmas and ethical issues related to access, anonymity and the masked complexity of choice and decision making. In taking into account the sensitive and sometimes difficult nature of an outsider gaining access to interview school children, the use of questionnaires was seen to be the most appropriate method to source information from the students within the secondary school system since it also has the benefit of offering the protection of anonymity to its respondents.

A police report from the Royal Antigua and Barbuda Police Force was sent to the University of Huddersfield's School of Education and Professional Development ensuring that the researcher has no previous criminal records. However, this proved not to be sufficient as one Deputy Head insisted that the police certificate of character which was furnished was not acceptable for interviewing children and that a UK CRB enhanced disclosure was required. The Deputy Head noted that while they were very happy to support projects such as this they would be breaking the law if they did not observe the requirements and this resulted in a delay to the research project.

In keeping with the UK's data protection act (1998), the Freedom of Information Act (2000), the BERA Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) and the University of Huddersfield's Ethical Guidelines for Good Practice in Teaching and Research, all data were collected, handled and stored in anonymous form. Prior to the start of each interview, interviewees were briefed and told that their participation was voluntary and that if they wished not to continue they could withdraw at any time,

or refrain from answering question(s) which they did not wish to answer for whatever reason. However, none chose to do so.

The participants were not fully aware as to the specific focus of the interviews, and whilst this may be argued by some not to be 'fully informed' consent, it was believed that by not giving participants more information than was necessary it would have been to encourage honest disclosure and to avoid participants being concerned that they were being stereotyped in a deviant role or offering the types of narratives which they believed to be desired by the researcher.

Interviewees were asked to choose a pseudonym so that they could not be identified by anyone other than the researcher (See Appendix 5 for a list of the Interviewees and their codes).

Although many interviewees stated that they were quite happy for their own names to be used, it was insisted that some sort of pseudonym be chosen.

4.10 Originality of the research

The phenomenon under study is not static, whether it is about students, teachers, schools, vocational training, higher education. ... Research done on their parents' generation when that generation was at school does not necessarily hold today in terms of who girls or boys are, what motivates them, what would best engage their interests in learning, or what trajectory they are following or need to follow to end up with a good job or life.

(Yates, 2004, p.32)

While there is nothing new about educating young people, the field of education is and has always been a diverse and dynamic field, and as such new methods, issues and policies are forever emerging. Therefore what was true yesterday may no longer be true today. As pointed out above by Yates (2004) research done in the past does not necessarily hold true for current approaches/practices employed in the achievement of career goals. However, it must be noted that past research sets the context and there may well be important continuity that aligns with current research and for the most part will definitely be useful in raising questions.

Prior to this study no attempt has been made to compare the perceptions of young people in Antigua to those of UK young people on choice and decision making. Similarly, educational research among students in Antigua is not common.

4.11 Summary

In this chapter, the methodological framework within which this study has been conducted has been detailed, together with the constraints which accompanied the research process. This chapter has explained why a qualitative approach was chosen in favour over a quantitative one and the steps taken to achieve the objectives outlined.

Chapter Five

EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ANTIGUA AND THE UK

5.1 Introduction

The chapter is divided into three sections which will cover different aspects of the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study. The first section describes the characteristics of the study population, while the second explores the employment aspirations of young people in the two countries, which is the first aim of this study. The third section examines the perceptions of the academic/vocational divide as it is considered to exist in Antigua and the UK. This will be related to the findings from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which suggests that:

- There is a lack of understanding of what the term vocational means.
- Vocational courses and qualifications do not carry the same apparent value as academic courses and qualifications.
- There is a perception that the more qualifications one attains, the better the job one is likely to get and the better will be the pay.

5.2 Characteristics of the study population

The respondents in this study came from seven different institutions in two different countries. This section describes the characteristics of the students who took part in this study. As has been noted in Chapter Four the respondents came from two schools and a college in Antigua and two schools and two colleges in the UK. The total number of students from Antigua was 188, of which 127 were secondary school students and 61 college students. In comparison, the total number of students from the UK was 197, of which 82 were secondary school students and 115 college students. This gives an overall total of 385 students.

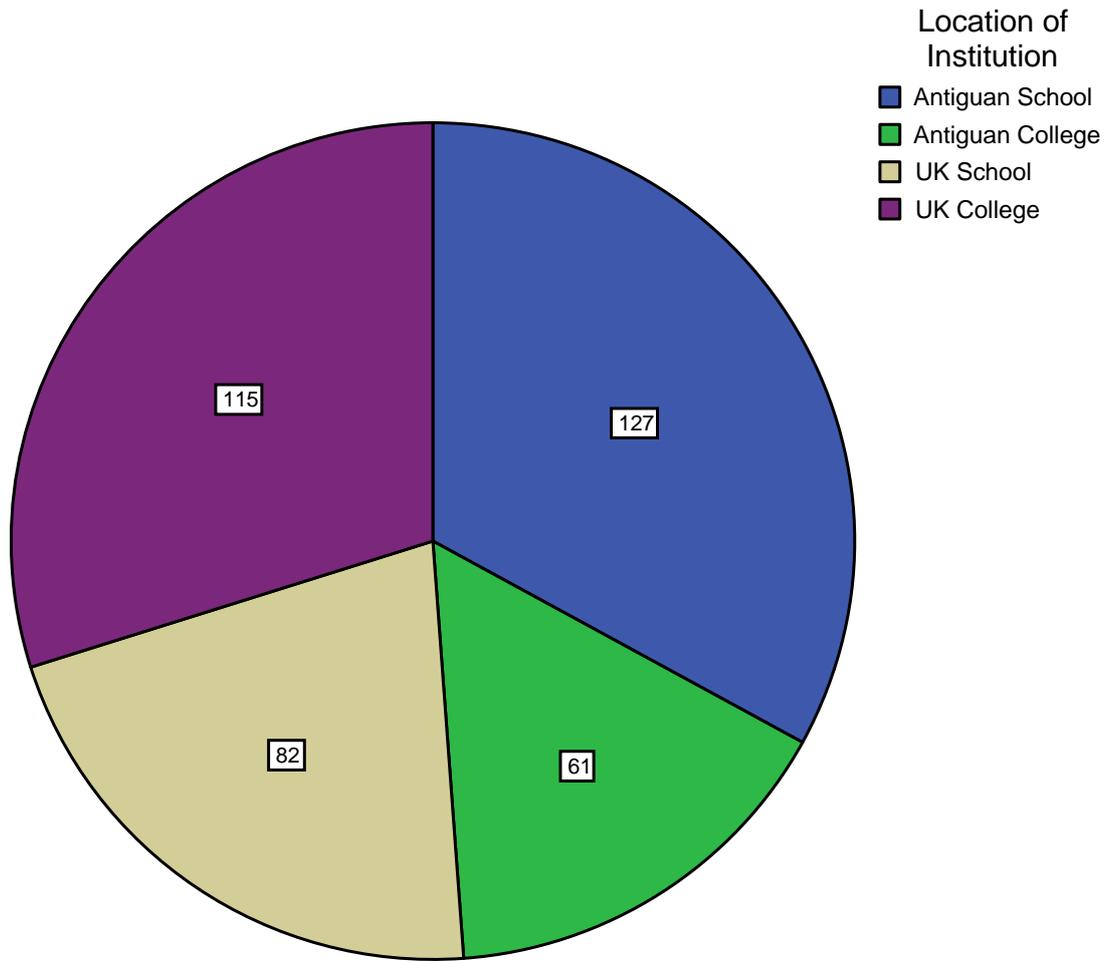


Figure 5.1 Institutions by location

Figure 5.2 provides a further breakdown of the student distribution in terms of institutions attended using the codes described in Chapter Four. Thus, of the 127 Antigua school students, 63 attended School A and 64 School B, Sixty one students attended the Antigua College C. In the UK 45 school students attended School D and 37 School E, whereas the college students were divided between 49 at College F and 66 at College G.

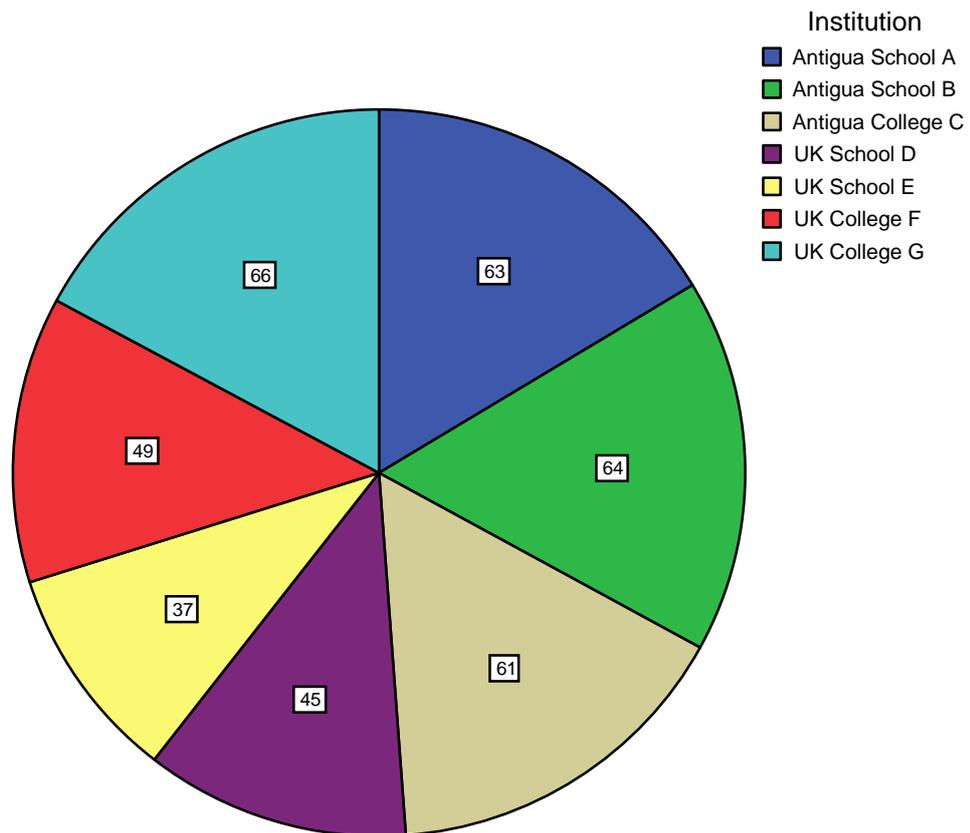


Figure 5.2 Institutional breakdown

5.2.1 Gender

Of the 385 Students who took part in this study 201 (52.2%) were female and 181 (47%) were male. There were 3 students who did not indicate their gender. Of the 127 Antiguan school students 89 (70.1%) were female compared to 38 (29.9%) who were male. Of the 82 UK school students 47 (57.3%) were female and 35 (42.7 %) were male. On the other hand, the gender distribution was for the most part predominantly male for the UK colleges with 77 (68.8%) being male and 35 (31.3%) female. The level 1 IT course at UK College F was notably completely male dominated (100%). In the Antiguan college C the first and second year Business courses were predominantly female, comprising 24 females (68.6%) and 11 males (31.4%). On the other hand the first and second year Engineering courses were predominantly male, comprising 20 males (76.92%) and 6 females (23.08%).

5.2.2 Ethnic background

The ethnic distribution is shown in Table 5.1. It shows that the respondents in the Antiguan Schools and College were primarily Black Caribbean. However, an interesting point to note is that some of the students have classed themselves as being African. It is also interesting to note that there were none who categorised themselves as white, Asian or Chinese in the Antiguan sample. In the case of the UK, the school respondents were mostly white, as were those taking Catering in the UK colleges. The respondents for UK Business and IT while also being for the most part white, had a large proportion of Asians compared to other ethnicities.

Table 5.1 Ethnic Background

Student Category	Ethnicity								
	White	Black Caribbean	Black African	Black Other	Indian	Pakistani	Chinese	Mixed Race	Other
Ant Schl.	0	83	17	8	0	0	0	16	3
Ant Bus.	0	29	0	4	0	0	0	2	0
Ant Eng.	0	17	5	1	0	0	0	2	0
UK Schl.	73	0	0	0	2	3	1	2	1
UK Bus.	17	0	1	0	1	12	0	0	0
UK IT.	30	1	0	0	2	17	0	3	1
UK Cat.	21	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Total	141	131	23	13	5	32	1	27	6

Key:

Ant Schl. - Antiguan Schools
 Ant Bus. – Antiguan Business Studies
 Ant Eng. – Antiguan Engineering Studies
 UK Schl. – UK Schools
 UK Bus. – UK Business Studies
 UK IT. – UK Information Technology Studies
 UK Cat. – UK Catering Studies

5.2.3 Expected destination on leaving school/college

School students in Antigua and the UK were asked what they planned on doing when they left the school that they were attending (Table 5.2 and 5.3). From both tables it is apparent that the vast majority of students desired to go to college to do A Levels, rather than to Further Education (FE) or get a job, or in the case of the UK, an apprenticeship.

Table 5.2 Expected destinations by year groups (Antigua Schools)

School			What do you plan to do when you leave this school				
			1 Get a job	2 Got to College (A Level)	3 Go to FE	4 Go to another institution	5 Don't Know
School A	Year Group	1 4th Form	2	28	4	4	0
		2 5th Form	2	9	7	4	3
		Total	4	37	11	8	3
School B	Year Group	1 4th Form	2	23	5	1	2
		2 5th Form	2	21	4	1	3
		Total	4	44	9	2	5

Table 5.3 Expected destinations by year groups (UK Schools)

School			What do you plan to do when you leave this school					
			1 Get a job	2 Get an apprenticeship	3 Go to FE	4 Go to 6th form college	5 Go to another school	6 Don't Know
School D	Year Group	7 Yr 10	1	1	3	13	4	2
		8 Yr 11	2	1	2	13	2	0
		Total	3	2	5	26	6	2
School E	Year Group	7 Yr 10	4	1	5	4		2
		8 Yr 11	6	2	5	6		0
		Total	10	3	10	10		2

5.2.4 Subjects planned to study

Table 5.4 shows that an overwhelming majority of the school respondents in both Antigua and the UK indicated that they wished to pursue academic subjects at college rather than vocational subjects.

Table 5.4 Subjects planned to study

			Subjects planned to Study		
			Vocational	Academic	Other
Location of Institution	Antiguan Schools	Count	5	90	26
		Row %	(4.3%)	(78.3%)	(22.6%)
	UK Schools	Count	20	43	
		Row %	(33.9%)	(72.9%)	

However, because of school timetabling, it sometimes was not possible for students to take the combination of subjects that they desired. As Nice Guy, a male Antiguan student, pointed out:

I had to choose. I wanted to do Technical Drawing and POA [Principles of Accounts] but I had to choose between the two of them and I chose POA

(AG.4th Frm. M. 2)

Having to choose subjects in this way may mean that students may be unable to select the combinations they want, and it may also limit future employment options. One student found this very demotivating:

... the school gives you subject choices earlier on and sometimes those are just not lined up properly. As in you have to choose between two subjects that you want to do and it just turns you off like. Because my father was a carpenter, and real good in carpentry. But I had to choose between carpentry and Geography and for what I want to do I have to have Geography so...

(AG.5th Frm. M. 17)

Another possibility was that the student was unable to take a particular subject because it was oversubscribed. This happened in both the UK and Antigua:

Well I chose administration but then they put me in the accounting class... Maybe the class was too big so they just put the rest...

(AG. BUS. F. 30)

I didn't choose this course... it just happened that they placed me in this class and I just go along with it. First I wanted to go in the nursing course - too young. Changed to administration; the class was too full; so now I'm in accounts.

(AG. BUS. F. 32)

I tried to become a student of music in Year 8 but I was denied and I was particularly annoyed because I heard of a number other students who had joined. Maybe it was that there was too many on the course or something... I was very disappointed that I couldn't.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 40)

Again, this student was disappointed and possibly demotivated by not being able to take a subject he wanted, especially when others had been able to do so and the reason why he had not been accepted was not explained. It was particularly difficult for him as he had hopes for a career in the music industry.

Occasionally, students in Antigua found that subject choices they had made in the 3rd form at age 14 turned out to be the wrong ones when they finally decided on a career a year later. Even at this early stage, it could perhaps prevent them from following the career of their choice:

I don't really get to do the subjects I want to do really. I want to become an Accountant and so I need... POB [Principles of Business]. And I wanted to do POB but my teacher say I can't do POB because I can't start it in 4th form. I have to start it in 3rd form or else I would be behind.

(AG.4th Frm. M. 2)

It could be that students were not informed that they had to begin new subjects from their 3rd year, or that there was a lack of careers advice at the appropriate time.

However, as the following quotation illustrates, some students will not have made up their minds by the 3rd form as to the career they want to follow:

Well, when you're in second form you have to choose subjects that you want to do in 3rd and then when you do go into 3rd form now you have to choose subjects that you want to go into 4th. And so when I was in 4th now I realised that I wanted to do Architecture but then they said that you can't change – You can't do a subject that you never did in 3rd or 2nd.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 19)

Another problem arose because of the Antiguan school system, when moving from post-primary to secondary school:

...when I was going primary school that what I wanted to do, but all my dreams were shattered because to become a doctor you have to be able to do biology and chemistry and physics... you see I didn't do them in primary school and because I came from a post primary class there are only a limited amount of subjects that I can do.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 11)

This suggests that, at least in Antigua, the need to make subject choices early, perhaps without adequate advice, and the subsequent inflexibility in the system for students wanting to select specific combinations of subjects, or to change options later, may restrict the future careers open to them.

5.2.5 Parent/carer's employment status

Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show that most of the parents/carers of the students were in employment. A minority of the students however, reported that they did not know the employment status of their parents/carer.

Table 5.5 Employment status of father/stepfather/male carer

		What is/was your father's/stepfather's/male carer's job?				
		Higher managerial and professional occupations %	Intermediate Occupations %	Lower supervisory, craft and related occupations %	Routine occupations %	Not in paid work/long-term unemployment %
Location of Institution	Antiguan School	28.7	23.5	35.7	12.2	0
	Antiguan College	20.8	20.8	49.1	9.4	0
	UK School	29.4	25.0	39.7	5.9	0
	UK College	29.2	21.5	40.0	7.7	1.5
Total		27.6	22.9	39.9	9.3	0.3

Table 5.6 Employment status of mother/stepmother/female carer

		What is/was your mother's/stepmother's/female carer's job?				
		Higher managerial and professional occupations %	Intermediate Occupations %	Lower supervisory, craft and related occupations %	Routine occupations %	Not in paid work/long-term unemployment %
Location of Institution	Antiguan School	25.0	26.8	23.2	23.2	1.8
	Antiguan College	23.5	37.3	19.6	19.6	0
	UK School	42.4	19.7	19.7	16.7	1.5
	UK College	37.7	11.5	21.3	19.7	9.8
Total		31.4	23.8	21.4	20.3	3.1

5.2.6 Use of the school or college library

The frequency of visits to the library within a six month period by respondents revealed that the majority of students had either never visited the library (31.2%) or had only visited occasionally (34.5%). On the other hand a minority of students reported that they had either visited once a day (1.6%) or more than weekly but less than once a day (1.8%). Twenty four percent of the respondents visited the library monthly or more than once a month, whereas only 24 of the 385 visited once a week. It was found that there were marked differences in library use between the two schools in Antigua. For example, 33 in one school said that they never used the library whereas in the other school the highest frequency was 30 who said that they used it occasionally.

5.2.7 Student part-time employment

It can be seen from the data in Table 5.7 that with the exception of school D in the UK, the majority of the school respondents did not have a part-time job. Table 5.8 goes on to show that the main motivation for getting a job was to earn money.

Table 5.7 Part-time employment by school students

School			Do you have a part time job?	
			Yes %	No %
Antigua School A	Year Group	4th Form	15.8	84.2
		5th Form	16.0	84.0
	Total		15.9	84.1
Antigua School B	Year Group	4th Form	34.4	65.6
		5th Form	29.0	71.0
	Total		31.7	68.3
UK School A	Year Group	Yr 10	56.0	44.0
		Yr 11	55.0	45.0
	Total		55.6	44.4
UK School B	Year Group	Yr 10	29.4	70.6
		Yr 11	42.1	57.9
	Total		36.1	63.9

Table 5.8 Reason for getting a job by school students

School			Why did you want to get a job			
			Money %	Experience %	Parental advice %	Other %
Antigua School A	Year Group	4th Form	50.0	16.7		33.3
		5th Form	75.0			25.0
	Total		60.0	10.0		30.0
Antigua School B	Year Group	4th Form	46.2	23.1	7.7	23.1
		5th Form	37.5	37.5		25.0
	Total		42.9	28.6	4.8	23.8
UK School A	Year Group	Yr 10	70.6	17.6	5.9	5.9
		Yr 11	87.5			12.5
	Total		76.0	12.0	4.0	8.0
UK School B	Year Group	Yr 10	87.5	12.5		
		Yr 11	100.0			
	Total		94.7	5.3		

Overall fewer college students reported being in part-time employment. However there is a balance (30/31) in the overall number at the Antiguan College C, with more participants from the second year Business and second year Engineering courses

having a part-time job. Once again the main motivation for getting the job was money, with parental advice being of least significance.

Table 5.9 Part-time employment by college students

College			Do you have a part time job?	
			Yes %	No %
Antigua College	Course	1st Year Business	33.3	66.7
		2nd Year Business	65.0	35.0
		1st Year Engineering	25.0	75.0
		2nd Year Engineering	64.3	35.7
		Total	49.2	50.8
UK College A	Course	Level 1 Business	40.0	60.0
		Level 2 Business	80.0	20.0
		Level 1 IT	40.0	60.0
		Level 2 IT	37.5	62.5
		Total	46.9	53.1
UK College B	Course	Level 2 Business	5.9	94.1
		Level 2 IT	37.5	62.5
		Level 1 Catering	56.0	44.0
		Total	36.4	63.6

Table 5.10 Reason for getting a job by college students

College			Why did you want to get a job?			
			Money %	Experience %	Parental advice %	Other %
Antigua College	Course	1st Year Business	80.0	20.0		
		2nd Year Business	44.4	44.4		11.1
		1st Year Engineering	50.0			50.0
		2nd Year Engineering	66.7			33.3
		Total	59.3	18.5		22.2
UK College A	Course	Level 1 Business	100.0			
		Level 2 Business	100.0			
		Level 1 IT	66.7	33.3		
		Level 2 IT	90.0			10.0
		Total	87.0	8.7		4.3
UK College B	Course	Level 2 Business			100.0	
		Level 2 IT	90.9			9.1
		Level 1 Catering	61.5	30.8		7.7
		Total	72.0	16.0	4.0	8.0

5.3 Employment aspirations

It was evident in both Antigua and the UK that some students have employment aspirations that they have held for a very long time, some since childhood. These are illustrated by examples from Antigua:

... from since I was little I used to go into the bank... and I told my mommy I want to be able to work in those kind of place.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 5)

I decided that since primary school. It was just a thing where a teacher can make such a big difference in a person's life that I just wanted to give back, just wanted to make a difference in another person's life. So I wanted to like give to the world the same joy that I received... Helping out the student fully - that's like the best joy a teacher can feel.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

These students appear to have made their choices based on observation of others at work, perhaps as role models. Hot Sauce, a male student on a catering course at a UK college had made his choice based on interest:

I always wanted to be a Chef; always. I like food, I like tasting new foods, like trying new things.

(UK.CAT. M. 83)

This student was also very realistic in terms of his abilities, as he disliked, and was not very good at, writing, and therefore thought that this would be a suitable career:

I thought oh yeah I aint got really got good grades... 'cause I don't like paper work or anything like that. So I thought with the grade I've got, Cheffing was one of my choices.

(UK.CAT. M. 83)

This is an example of the 'exclusive' selection process as defined by White (2007), which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Students who held such aspirations tended to go on and choose their subjects accordingly:

... because I had a love for children so I decided, ok then, if I have this then I do the nursing course it will put me closer towards babies and so forth.

(AG. BUS. F. 32)

Well, I knew I want to become an accountant so I chose accounts.

(AG.4th Frm. M. 12)

Thus the starting point can be either an academic or vocational subject or a specific career.

There is evidence that students can be quite single minded in pursuing their goals:

...at school, yeah, you say you want to do this ... so that means I'm going to put all my effort into working towards that goal. So you do everything pertaining to that.

(AG. BUS. F. 31)

Because I believe education is important for me to become a doctor, for example you can't become a doctor if you don't have the subjects like chemistry, biology, you need to know what you're about in life in order to get a job...

(AG.4th Frm. F. 14)

Then there are students who may have had long held aspirations but have been unable to fulfil them. This may have been because they have taken the wrong subjects, or been placed on the wrong course, or due to inflexibility in the system. This is discussed in Section 5.2.5.

Naturally, there will be some students who will not achieve their goals because of their lack of ability in a subject that is needed for their intended career, a gap between aspiration and the reality:

[I wanted to be] an astronomer. I really didn't get my science subjects – like chemistry, physics and biology and so...

(AG. ENG. M. 23)

Similarly, Roo, a male Antiguan student, student speaks of his previous desires which have changed due to his not acquiring the necessary pass grades:

I was planning on being a Lab Technician... My life was already planned out; not for the Engineering Department right, but for a different part, A' levels. I wanted to [be] anything like Biochemist or a Lab Technician. But I didn't get the subject Chemistry because we started so late in the term in secondary school... Yeah, so me just give that a rest; just take a different path for right now, which is electronics.

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

Others are either lacking in confidence, or being realistic, in appreciating that they will not obtain the subjects or grades needed to achieve their desires, as Minnie, a UK Year 11 pupil, explains:

I chose PE coz I wanted to do something to do with physiotherapy... Yeah I did want to do that but for the GCSE you need above a C in your science and um, I aren't good enough in science so I don't think I'll be able to do it... I don't think I've got as much confidence as I had that I could get the right qualifications to do it really.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 43)

For others, in both countries, their approach to subject choice was more haphazard:

I want to be a journalist but I said before I can get into that field I'd rather to be a business person or be an accountant or something like that so I choose mostly to do business subjects.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 13)

However, she goes on to explain that, despite her wish to become a journalist, she has rejected studying English literature:

I don't like literature. Maybe because of the teachers, that's why I didn't choose literature.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 13)

This could potentially limit her opportunities in journalism, but she does have a 'back-up plan' in studying business studies. This is also true of Cornflakes, who is also taking business studies, but actually wants to become a teacher:

Well that's the aim... [teaching] is something that I always wanted to do but if it's that I don't get to do it, I will always have something to go back on.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

A third Antiguan student, Skill, also wants to teach, but plans to train in accountancy first:

Well at the time when I finished school I was only 16. I really wanted to become a Maths teacher at the secondary level but I felt that 16 was too young an age to start to teach, so I decided for the two years let me go into college. And that's why I signed up for accounting, that's another subject that I love. So right now I am pursuing my associate degree at college. But the main goal is to finish here and then go back and teach.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

These students are astute enough to understand that if their ideal careers cannot be realised they will need to have another to fall back on. Many UK students also had 'back up' plans, but in many cases this was because their first choice of career was potentially unrealistic:

I would love to do directing, directing films and theatre as well. Um, I also have a fall back plan that if that doesn't work out I'd love to teach drama as well at school. That's just because if – I also know that directors aren't always working, and I wouldn't like to be idle, in that time I would like to teach drama part time.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 56)

Again, some students were very aware that their dream could not be fulfilled because of their lack of academic ability:

If I could - if I could - my thing that I'd really want to do would be an architect... that's the only thing I want to be... if I had the chance to do it I'd definitely do it but I just don't think... I'd need the brain to be that and I haven't got enough brain to do that but with a graphic designer I could - I could do that and it's something I like anyway- that's what I want to do.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 57)

This realisation can be very painful.

Alternatively, students were aware, or had been told that they were, 'good' at something, but had no idea about what a career in this area would actually involve, or how to go about starting one, or training for it. The next quote demonstrates a different kind of fantasy, based on ignorance:

I've always liked dancing and I don't want to sound big headed but I am good at dancing and really love dancing but its just so, its just so difficult and I've just sort of maybe given up trying because I don't know enough about it and... I don't know where to go or what your life's like if you were a dancer. I wouldn't, I didn't want to be in like shows... I wanted to be more like a video dancer. You know like erm you switch MTV on or something and somebody will have a big group of dancers in the back. That's what I wanted to do but I just don't know enough about it and you watch people like that and you just think I'm not good enough. My mum used to always tell me that but I think it's because I'm her little girl (laugh).

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 45)

These students had their employment dreams, but were also aware of the realities of achieving such rare and high profile careers.

There was a final group of students who still had no clear idea about what they wanted to do, as illustrated by Liz, a UK Year 11 student, who was asked how she went about choosing her GCSE subject when in Year 9:

Um, for GCSEs, um 'coz I didn't, I don't have any plans for future, I don't have sort of a set line I want to go down. So I just chose the subjects on the ones that I'd enjoyed and I thought I'd enjoy to carry on. There wasn't any future career prospects I was thinking about.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 39)

When pressed about possible career choices, she went on to say:

...the most direct I could say is that I want to work with people. I don't particularly want an office job. I don't want to sit there everyday doing the same thing. I want a bit of variation to what I do. But other than that I've got absolutely no idea really.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 39)

Another student, Lucy, appeared to make her career choice during the interview discussion:

Well, I'll go to sixth form and I'm not really sure what ... I don't know. I've been thinking about this recently because it's best to have an idea now than get to after school and think that you don't know what you're doing. Um, I work, I've worked, I've had a job for about a year now working on a Saturday in a beauty salon and I've really grown to like that and I'd love to do that, and that's what I want to do now so I'd go to college and um (laugh) learn how to be a beauty therapist I'd like to do that.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 45)

However, earlier on, Lucy had said that she chose some subjects, for example, Dance and Drama, because she wanted to have a career as a dancer.

In summary, many students have long-held career aspirations, and can be quite determined in following these. Many showed a good awareness of their abilities and whether their aspirations were realisable, and had 'second choice' or back up plans if they were not successful in achieving their first aims. Some, however, had unrealistic expectations in terms of the careers that were open to them, and appeared uninformed as to what would be required. A few, still at school and mainly in the UK, were not yet sure about what they wanted to do.

5.4 Understanding of the terms 'academic' and 'vocational'

Two of the aims of this study are related to the exploration of young people's career aspirations and how they are influenced in their career decision making. In order to study this effectively, it was considered necessary to investigate attitudes towards academic and vocational careers, and whether this affected young peoples' decisions. Thus, the questionnaire sought to explore young peoples' understanding of the terms 'academic' and 'vocational' and how various jobs and work roles were defined. One question asked whether participants would consider a vocational career.

Table 5.11 Students who would choose a vocational career

		Would you choose a vocational career		Total
		Yes	No	
Location of Institution	Antiguan School	44	82	126
		34.9%	65.1%	100.0%
	UK School	33	46	79
		41.8%	58.2%	100.0%
Total		77	128	205
		37.6%	62.4%	100.0%

Table 5.4 in Section 5.2.4 has already shown that the majority participants in both the UK and Antigua planned to take academic rather than vocational subjects at college. This preference appears to continue in their choice of career, in that, when asked if they would choose a vocational career, 65% of Antiguan students and 58% of UK students stated that they would not (Table 5.11).

This information must be treated with caution, however, as the subsequent interviews confirmed that there were many different interpretations of what the terms ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ meant. For example, when asked what he understood by the term ‘academic’ one UK interviewee, Mark, responded:

Like, its like course work and exams.

(UK. BUS. M. 60)

Another UK student, Paul, was asked whether the course he was undertaking was an academic or vocational one. He replied:

The course I’m doing now? You could say it’s a bit of both’ coz we do our work but we also do a lot – we do a lot of practical stuff as well. Like in one lesson we get to design web sites and in another lesson we’ll be doing like cash flow and everything that’s pretty - like finance that’ll be pretty academic won’t it?

(UK. BUS. M. 59)

He was clearly equating ‘vocational’ with ‘practical’, as did the following UK student:

A vocation is like a job ain’t it when you want to do vocational ... Vocational is like practical, ain’t it really?

(UK. BUS. M. 59)

As can be seen in the following quotes, attempts to explain the term vocational showed a lack of understanding. For Kay, another UK student, her understanding was that ‘vocational’ meant:

Talking?

(UK. BUS. F. 58)

Other examples of responses, from participants in both countries, were:

Umm, temporary?

(UK. IT. M. 63)

Ahm- don't know- I couldn't- I can't really think of it.

(UK. IT. M. 66)

Nothing! Nothing at all, I have no idea what it means (laughs).

(UK. BUS. F. 73)

Vocational? I don't think I ever heard that word before.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

On the other hand, a few individuals did exhibit some understanding of the term ‘vocational’, specifically as it related to the skills needed for an occupational trade or profession:

Vocational is your subjects that are literally equipping you to go straight out into work. It's not... I mean they are academic but they are designed to be specific to work like in child care or your plumbing or it's equipping you with those skills to go straight out to work.

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

This student is also aware that there may be an academic element to vocational courses. Another, this time from Antigua, perceived ‘vocational’ as referring to low status jobs:

Vocational? Ahm, (long pause) I think that has to deal with like craft, to do with you hands, using your hands etcetera. Like woodwork those sorts of things.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 8)

However, this student recognised that ‘vocational’ could also refer to the professions, such as architecture and engineering, as well as carpentry and plumbing:

Ahm , like learning architecture and those type of things. I think it - well I think it's like ahm, skills. Like architecture, plumbing, carpentry, engineering...

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

These fuller explanations only serve to show further confusion. Vocational subjects are also academic because they are studied at college; architecture is vocational because it requires skills – one Antiguan student comes up with the most widely used definition, of vocational being related to craft, or using one’s hands. These responses reflect a universal lack of a clear understanding of the term – is being a medical doctor vocational? The finding here reinforces the work done by Davies and Biesta (2007) who also found that the 14-16 year olds in their study did not understand what ‘vocational’ meant.

Unlike the lack of understanding exhibited when asked about the term ‘vocational’, the respondents appeared to have a clearer understanding of what the term academic means:

More theory based if it was academic I would say. It’s more the background of things and where things came from and more the book research and things like that.

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

Well academic mainly has to deal with ahm, books. Yeah, those subjects that deal with the books etcetera.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 8)

More like, ahm, the subjects it self. Like Maths, English, and that sort of stuff.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

Here, they describe academic as ‘theory based’, ‘book research’ or the subjects that one studies. Others thought the term would be used to describe individuals, such as teachers:

Academic is more like intellect ain’t it? Like you’d say like a teacher’s like academic wouldn’t you so it’s like – more like brainy - brainy subjects are academic subjects

(UK. BUS. M. 59)

‘Brainy’ was used as an alternative in some instances:

Brainy. Intelligent.

(UK. Yr. 10. M. 48)

I believe that academic is like being smart.

(AG. 4th Frm. M. 2)

One Antiguan student related ‘academic’ with the need to work hard, to go to university and to gain qualifications in order to enter professional employment:

Academic, like those jobs you have to like really work hard at to get like your different degrees and so on, and do long years at university
(AG.4th Frm. F. 15)

For some it was the mode of assessment which determined whether or not a course was academic or vocational:

Erm, it’s more course work than exams. It’s not the set A level – like an exam at the end of the year. You work... by doing assignments and things.
(UK. BUS. F. 69)

Erm, like learning and exam rather than course work.
(UK. BUS. F. 69)

For another UK student it is related to whether the course is practically or theoretically based:

I’d guess a more practical subject, sort of hairdressing course or maybe like the child development one I’ve done, where you’re learning more practical subjects. I think... that depends on the course to whether its practical, the amount from practical to theory. If it’s a lot of practical then I’d say it was more vocational, but the one I’m doing next year is 80% exam and I’d say that would be more of an A level than a vocational because there’s more... There isn’t as much of a practical side to it.
(UK. Yr. 11. F. 39)

It appears that the terms are not in common usage in schools and perhaps even amongst career advisors:

I don’t think school makes it clear enough what they’re talking about really.
(UK. Yr. 10. F. 49)

Alternatively, the terms were used but not fully explained, as Helen notes:

They do say stuff but they don’t explain what it means. They do say things like ahm well- what would you rather do, vocational or a academic job and stuff like that. Or they do go on to courses saying oh do you want to take a B Tech or A levels or - I don’t know what the other types of things are - I don’t even know what half the things mean.
(UK. Yr. 11. F. 53)

However, of more significance in terms of young peoples’ perceptions, and subsequent influences on their career choices is that for some, vocational courses and jobs were

considered to be for the less able, or those who had not bothered to work hard, or who failed to achieve good grades, at school. For Dominique, an Antiguan student, her impression of mechanics and hairdressers is that of individuals who dropped out of school and went to the Youth Skills Training Institute in Antigua to learn a trade or skill:

Because from what I'm seeing so far most mechanics that I would know and most hairdressers, those are people that didn't spend time in school they dropped out and had to go to Youth Skills. Those are the kinds of people I basically see...

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

Not dissimilar was Dimitry's vision of those who went into the building trades; he had a neat distinction between craft trades and architects and draftsmen:

Well the not so bright people, they get like masons, you know those sorts like carpentry, painting jobs and stuff. Painting of houses and so. And the bright people they get like drawing of the house plans and you know.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 8)

'Ghost' was a third Antiguan student who sums up his perception by suggesting that the easy option for those who have dropped out of school is to learn something like carpentry or masonry:

Yeah! Because if somebody drop out of school you know that mean like ...they don't want to become nothing or whatever cause they form the fool in school. So you not go expect them to go and go try get in college or something so they go just get a job and it easy to learn a carpenter trade or mason...

(AG.5th Frm. M. 10)

'Skill' echoes this view, that 'school dropouts' are more likely to become tradesmen:

Because those persons who maybe would have dropped out would then try to like make something of their lives and develop a trade... So that's why you would see the dropout develop in the trade and becoming the tradesman while the schoolish person would still be in school.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

The participants' responses in this study would suggest that they did not have a clear understanding as to what the terms 'academic' or 'vocational' mean. Many had not heard of the term 'vocational' and struggled with various definitions. Others were more specific, understanding that it could relate to a course - where the balance of subject matter towards the practical made it vocational - or to a career. When applied to careers, however, much confusion arose. Although jobs such as hairdresser, stone

mason or carpenter were understood to be vocational, others such as architecture could be considered to be either.

This confusion is reflected in society as a whole. It also raises the question of what is actually meant by academic and vocational and how valid the distinction is. For while it is common to refer to professional careers or subject areas such as medicine and law as being academic, being a doctor or a lawyer is a vocational career; so is, for example, being a teacher, a dentist an accountant, as they refer to subjects or areas of study which lead directly into specific careers.

However, of significance to this study is that, in some respondents, the term ‘vocational’ referred to jobs taken by those who had failed in school. This attitude was confined to participants from Antigua, but it was quite marked. It would suggest a tendency to perceive vocational jobs as low status. Fuller and Unwin (2007) have also discovered this in their research. This is a factor which could have an influence on the career decision making process for young people. This will be explored further in the next section.

5.5 Perceived parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications

In the questionnaire, participants were asked what they thought was going to be the most important in helping them obtain a job. Over half (and 64% in Antigua) thought that obtaining academic qualifications would be the most important factor, followed by relevant skills and experience.

Table 5.12 Important factors in getting a job

		What do you think is most important to you getting a job				
		Vocational qualifications %	Academic qualifications %	Skills %	Experience %	Don't know %
Location of Institution	Antiguan School	1	64	16	14	5
	UK School	3	54	11	18	14

Nearly all participants had a very clear impression that obtaining qualifications was central to gaining employment. As Jimmy pointed out:

If you get the grades that you need then you can pretty much get whatever job you want if you get high grades

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 54)

He went on to give a warning about the effort needed to achieve high grades at school:

but it all depends what you do in school life because if you don't do nowt at school and you just mess around smoking and stuff then you're not gonna get good grades and you're not gonna get a good job

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 54)

Another Antiguan student points out how a prospective employer might make their selection, based on the applications forms:

If an employer looks on your application and someone has got better qualifications, they'll usually look at that and think, oh, they've got really good qualifications, I'll look at them first

(UK. BUS. M. 75)

This belief in the importance of academic qualifications for getting a good job is highlighted by this female UK business student when she speaks of her reason for doing A levels:

It's better to get A Levels I think. To get a better job. Higher paid.

(UK. BUS. F. 58)

However, as Table 5.13 indicates, when young people in both countries were asked whether they agreed with the statement that academic subjects were more 'important' than vocational ones in getting a job, only Antiguan school students strongly agreed that this was the case. The rest, who were either in UK schools or in vocational colleges in Antigua or the UK, were on the whole, uncertain. However, given the findings in the previous section, that the majority of young people did not understand the term academic and vocational, not a lot can be concluded from this. The students interviewed in this study tended not to speak of their various disciplines or fields of study in terms of their being academic or vocational. Specific examples from the interviews provide a better insight into what young people really think.

Table 5.13 Relative importance of academic and vocational subjects

		Academic subjects are more important than vocational subjects					Total
		1 strongly agree	2 agree	3 uncertain	4 disagree	5 strongly disagree	
Location of Institution	1 Antiguan School	46	22	20	23	9	120
	2 Antiguan College	10	10	20	11	7	58
	3 UK School	4	20	32	13	6	75
	4 UK College	6	22	60	16	2	106
Total		66	74	132	63	24	359

For example, Amie, an Antiguan student, points out that it is not just about the qualification, but about how individuals are perceived through their qualifications:

Well, society will view the A level students as, you know, the bright students and view Commercial [vocational stream] as those who didn't get into A levels.

(AG. BUS. M. 34)

Mark, a UK business studies student, agrees that people with academic qualifications may be viewed differently:

I don't know really. Probably that the academic students are more intelligent. Like a stereotypical view of them. That they are more intelligent.

(UK. BUS. M. 60)

Other UK students are also conscious of the lack of parity of esteem given to their BTEC diploma, a 'vocational' qualification, and object to its being labelled differently, despite being ostensibly of equal weight to an A level:

I'm doing a diploma in ICT which is equivalent to one A level which if it is one A level in ICT why can't they just call it an A level instead of a diploma?

(UK. IT. M. 65)

Another UK student, Javed, attempts to explain the confusion that the different labels, and the lack of perceived parity of equivalent courses:

... some people say that a BTEC isn't worth an A level... This is just an easier way, this that and the other. But I feel it's right. If you're doing an A level or GNVQ, BTEC or what have you, it's right for you. They won't look differently at it. If they do, then obviously you've got a problem with that. Then you should only have one level. Like an A level through out all of the courses.

(UK. BUS. M. 77)

He believes that all courses of a similar level should be viewed as equal, and that individuals should choose the course that is right for them. However, as he

goes on to point out, if employers then view the qualifications differently, this is a problem. If this is the case, he suggests that all courses of a similar level should be called A level.

Jane, another UK student, thinks that vocational qualifications should be better promoted to young people, as those with such qualifications can be successful and, again, make a lot of money:

I think they should tell us more about vocational jobs, coz it seems like the way they present it to us its more like if you don't go to sixth form and get A levels then you're not going to have a good job, which is just not right because people...especially self employed people, they can go off and they can make a lot of money, they don't have to have A levels...

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 38)

Taz, a catering student considers that those who plan to go to university will obtain 'top' jobs; he makes a clear distinction between these and vocational jobs or trades:

Because you need your qualifications from university to get your top office jobs and what not, whereas... to be a plumber you can just be an apprentice and you'll know do that. The same with [a] joiner, the same with... cause they're trades, the same with cheffing. And I feel like university like, the people who did enjoy school more, the more like written base people go more to uni.

(UK. CAT. M. 80)

According to him, those who enjoyed school, or who are more academic, will go to university and then obtain the 'top' jobs. Mark, a male business studies student, also talked about going to university in order to obtain a 'good' job:

I don't think I'd get as good a job as I would if I went into university. They'll look at your qualifications when you apply for a job because that's the thing that they automatically look at...

(UK. BUS. M. 60)

He also pointed out that a degree would be the route to a 'good' job. However he also thought that other factors would be considered, such as staying power and punctuality:

...and then maybe after they'll look at your punctuality and see if you can stick to things, but I think the main reason is if I get good grades then I'm bound to get a job or quite a good job.

(UK. BUS. M. 60)

Higgins, another UK business studies student, saw going to university as being important not just for the qualifications, but for gaining experience and also for proving to employers that one has the necessary 'graduate skills':

I want to go to uni just for the experience... I want to move out and meet new people... just so that I can get a better job at the end of it. Because you're saying that you can learn and you can adapt to new things and employers look for that. All that experience is important as well.

(UK. BUS. F. 69)

However, for Hubert, going to university is about earning more money and having a better lifestyle:

The idea of a better education, it means you get better money and a better way of life and it's nice to have less stress about things... I'm not saying that people who don't go to uni don't have a good life, but what what I've seen, people that do go to uni... just live easier.

(UK. BUS. M. 70)

In summary, the majority of participants felt that obtaining academic qualifications was an essential factor in helping them to gain well paid employment, and therefore it was necessary to work hard and achieve high grades in school. There was a general consensus that employers would recruit those who have higher grades over others. However, Jenkins and Wolf (2005) point out that this is not necessarily the case, as employers also look for other factors such as experience, skills, motivation and references. Social and 'transferable' workplace skills are also important (Payne, 2000). Jenkins and Wolf (2005) indicate that employers are also tending to use psychometric tests as part of their selection process.

Students tended to see a clear distinction between academic and vocational subjects, although they rarely used these terms. What they did was to emphasise the importance of A levels to their getting a good job. The Antiguan school students in particular saw academic subjects as being more important than vocational ones; the Antiguan college students were less certain, although it has to be said that the college students had, on the whole, already selected a vocational route. In the UK, those who were taking vocational courses such as BTEC or GNVQ perceived that these were viewed less favourably than A Levels, not just by employers but by society in general, and they were unhappy about this. This view is reinforced by Unwin and Wellington (2001) who found that, in their study, their interviewees saw GNVQs as being 'lower' than A Levels, and more recently still, by Bathmaker and Avis (2007).

Thus, the lack of parity between vocational and academic qualifications was much in evidence in this section, with, for the most part, vocational qualifications viewed as being taken by those who were less able. Again, this finding supports previous research findings (Cockett, 1996; Edwards, 1997; Wolf, 2002).

University degrees were seen to be of prime value and the general belief was that the more academic students will go to university and then get the 'best' jobs. However, going to university was also considered to be an experience in itself, as well as showing employers that one has the necessary graduate skills.

5.6 Perceived parity of esteem between vocational and academic (professional) careers

5.6.1 What makes a 'good' job?

The majority of participants used the term 'a good job' or talked about 'getting a good job', and had very strong ideas about the characteristics of such a job. Although these differed quite widely, a common denominator was that the job paid well. To the participants, a good job is, typically:

A job that you enjoy. A job that pays well.

(UK. BUS. M. 75)

However, a good job is more than money alone. The same participant then qualified his comments by suggesting that, for him at least, the money would not be everything, he wanted a job that did not occupy all his leisure time as well. However, he does return to pay again at the end:

Well, well enough... In my personal view, a good job to me would be a job that means that I've got time to see my family and friends around it; a job that would give me opportunities to do different things and a job that pays well.

(UK. BUS. M. 75)

Another, Efa, wanted her job to challenge her, and enable her to gain respect, but money also played a part:

Well, a good job is one I think you'd have to use your brain to really do the work, and a well paying job, and one that is high respect to a certain degree

(AG.5th Frm. F. 9)

Money was not the sole factor for Shenelle either, but the job had to be one that she wanted to do and one that she was qualified to do:

Well, it is the money, but it's what the person wants to do. According to their education...

(AG.4th Frm. F. 5)

This Antiguan student, Mr Smooth, was more specific:

A good career is someplace in management owning your own business, maybe even in aviation. Something that pays a certain amount of money

(AG. BUS. M. 36)

So, in his case, it was not just the money. The 'good' aspect was being able to have his own business. He gave an example of how this could happen:

Usually mechanics start off working for somebody and then opening their own garage. And that pays.

(AG. BUS. M. 36)

Clearly, this student was not discounting a vocational career as he could see this as a route to managing his own business.

Pay can have a major influence on career choice. One UK student, Anne, had changed her mind about her choice of career when she found out that the pay was poor:

I used to consider being a hairdresser but I know that I can do better than that 'coz they don't get particularly good money. 'Coz I know people that are hairdressers and they all say that they'd prefer to be on a better wage.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 42)

However, one student, Hanah, whose ambition it was to become a film director, was so keen that she claimed she would do it even if the money was poor:

I wouldn't mind being a director on a low budget [pay] simply because I just – I would love to direct a film, just to be able to say that I'm a director.

(UK. Yr.11. F.56)

It is noted, though, that she 'wanted to be able to say that she was a director' – it was the status of the role, rather than the pay, that made this a 'good' job.

On the other hand, Marge, another UK student, made a distinction between a 'job' and a 'career'. A mature student, she pointed out that she had had a number of jobs:

I've done all sorts, yeah, and it was boring. It was OK for earning money, but... it's a job, not a career. I think that's the difference... I just want more from my life than that.

(UK. BUS. F.72)

Even though, presumably she earned a reasonable pay (as she suggests the money was 'OK'), she wants a career rather than a job that bores her. On the other hand, 'Buggs', a UK business studies student, pointed out that some people, although capable of a high powered job, may prefer to opt for one that was less demanding or stressful, or perhaps was better suited to their personality:

...there might be someone really smart that doesn't want to go do one of those [high powered] jobs, they wanna be more relaxed. And that's maybe how they want to live their life...a lot of these higher jobs are longer hours.

(UK. BUS. M.74)

He goes on to point out that they may, for example, opt for bar work, if they have a sociable personality:

They might want a bar job, more social... I mean, there's lots of different ways that you can move up in certain systems.

(UK. BUS. M.74)

He suggests that there could be scope for them to progress their career without being in a high powered job.

5.6.2 Job status

Although, as has been shown, the terms 'academic' and 'vocational' are not universally used when discussing types of career, participants had very strong opinions about the status of various jobs. Champ, a UK student, provided his list of 'important' jobs:

Basically, you know, there are more important jobs like becoming a judge, barrister, solicitor, them are more important jobs. Working in the council etcetera, working as a teacher.

(UK. BUS. M. 62)

Sometimes the 'better' careers were considered to be those that required further qualifications:

I see some careers as being better than others...Like bankers and teaching. People view them as better than the average carpenter or plumber. Because they might say certain jobs require a specific amount of qualifications while others might not – might only require you to pound a hammer.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

The reference to ‘pound a hammer’ here is an important one, reflecting his perception of vocational careers, although he does not use the term.

Tisha, an Antiguan student, tells us that all her friends are concentrating on becoming bankers, doctors or lawyers. When asked to explain why she thinks this is, she goes on to say:

Because in their opinion that’s the main event out now, that’s the main career that everybody wants... Because in some people’s point of view they think that if they become a doctor everybody will know them and they’ll be considered up there with the upper class or something like that.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 3)

Tisha suggests that aspiring to be a doctor means that she will progress to a different class, and will also occupy a position in society where she is known and respected. She will have status.

Lucy also highlights the way in which society in general attributes a certain status to academic or professional careers over vocational ones:

If you were at a party and you met someone that said they was a hairdresser and somebody that was a lawyer you would automatically think, oh they are really, really bright, meaning the lawyers and the hairdressers aren’t. But that’s not always the case at all it’s just you ... I don’t know you just automatically think it don’t you? You can’t help it.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 45)

She claims that this is inbuilt – one can’t help thinking in terms of these stereotypes, even when it isn’t necessarily the case.

Status so often revolves around what other people think of you, as ‘Cornflakes’, an Antiguan student, points out:

Because if I am working at a bank, people would think that I'm up there... I'm getting this and such amount of money, whereas somebody who is like working in a store... like that kind of comparison. But I wouldn't say that all jobs are better, but it depends. Because of how much the person is getting paid they will think that it is actually better.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

'Cornflakes' again equates salary with the perception of a high status job.

This female Antiguan school student listed the jobs that she was not prepared to do:

Ah, being a secretary [laughs], plumbing and stuff; I would never be a seamstress.

(AG. 5th Frm. F.19)

When asked why not, she explained:

Maybe because my family thinks that they're lower classed jobs, so I think so too... My father says that he doesn't want any of us working as no secretary or working in no store for somebody...

(AG. 5th Frm. F.19)

Her perceptions of the status of various job roles have been passed on by her father, who clearly has high expectations for his offspring. Lucy, a female UK student reported a similar situation, in that her mother left school early and did not have a career:

She's said to me before... look, I left school and I did crap... You don't want to turn out like me. I got stuck... where was she working? In a factory or something – a sewing factory. She doesn't want me to be like that... you know, get lost...

(UK. Yr.10. F.45)

The mother does not want her daughter to follow into a similar low status job and 'get lost'; she wishes her to have a proper career. As will be shown in Section 6.3, the influence of parents, particularly in not wanting their children to follow them into 'dead end' jobs', is very strong. Most parents have much higher aspirations for their offspring and don't want them to make the mistakes that they have made.

Working conditions were another important consideration of job status. Like Marge, 'Buggs', another UK student, had gone back to college after a succession of menial jobs. He was finding college hard, but was 'fed up with rubbish jobs'. When prompted to give details, he continued:

The last job I did, I was a trainee butcher at a meat packing place. It was more like a pig factory and it was like working in a fridge and you were cutting up all this meat and it were... oh, it were horrible, the smell and you know there's been people that were being thrown [sic] six pounds fifty an hour. I want something more – a career.

(UK. BUS. M.74)

Buggs describes the (admittedly appalling sounding) working conditions, and, with contempt, the poor pay. He also makes clear that he wants 'something more', a career.

Working conditions are a significant factor for another UK student, Douglas. He explained that his friend had become a bricklayer, but that he considered it to be a 'second best' job. When asked to explain why, he stated:

Because you use your hands and... like I just see it as a lower job. I don't think the pay is that bad but it's just that you get dirty and stuff like that and do your back in.

(UK. IT. M. 68)

Although in this case he considers the pay to be not too bad, it is the dirt and the possibility of injury that is his concern.

Having a 'dirty' job requires the use of protective clothing. For some students, the issue of what they would be expected to wear at work was pivotal. This Antiguan student explained how she wanted a particular office role because of the 'dress code':

You had to be like in the jacket and the tie with the little suitcase and the woman does be in the heels and the skirt and the jacket...

(AG. BUS. F. 28)

Paul, a UK student, also explained why he wanted to work in an office:

Ahm, I just think – it is superficial but I just like wearing suits [laughs].

(UK. BUS. M.59)

Another female student, this time in the UK, explains what she had liked about her placement in an office, where she was expected to wear a suit :

...it's just that I got called Miss [name] which was very good. It made me smile. I got a little name tag as well and I had to wear a suit.

(UK. BUS. F.73)

She went on to describe how she had been given responsibility, which she really enjoyed:

I actually got to do important stuff. I didn't make coffee. I mailed letters, I restyled the filing cabinets, I restyled the computing stuff...
(UK. BUS. F.73)

Presumably, on her placement she had expected to be making the tea, but instead had been given more important tasks.

Lisa, another UK student, considers that working in an office confers 'respectability':

I'd like to work somewhere with a bit of respectability. I wouldn't like to work in a fish shop or anything. I did my work experience in an office and I loved it, I really did.

(UK. Yr.10. F.45)

This UK student, wanting to be in marketing, attempted to explain exactly what it was that attracted him to the role:

...when I met the reps from different companies and stuff... There was just something about their job that I quite liked.

(UK. BUS. M.75)

When asked what the status of the job that appealed to him, he continued:

Yeah, I definitely think so. Yeah, 'coz that's what I'm like. I'm a bit of a poser sometimes... I like the way, what they do... and being able to drive around the country and go do different stuff. You know, it's like they do something different every day. And every single one I spoke to enjoyed their job. So that's good, you know.

(UK. BUS. M.75)

Evidently, he had observed them at work, liking what they did and the way they did it and this impressed him, as did the variety of their job. Another factor, also important to him, was that they had all said that they enjoyed their work.

5.6.3 Certain jobs for certain people

Many participants had developed a concept that different people would be suited to different job roles. This was usually related to intelligence, occasionally to practical or artistic ability. A UK student suggested that 'bright people' might go on to be:

...doctors, stuff like that and then like, hairdressers for the people that aren't so bright and working with children, you don't need much qualifications and stuff.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 43)

Dominique agreed, pointing out:

...like pilots and people that navigate... I would say those [jobs] are for bright people. Whereas also for bright people they could be professors or teachers or whatever they want to be.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

There is a suggestion that ‘bright people’ can choose their careers, they can be ‘whatever they want to be’. On the other hand, she goes on to say:

For the not so bright, you really can't put them into the navigating and everything like that. Whereas they may be fit for teaching maybe or selling or something, I don't think they would be fit for owning a business by themselves.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

Francis pointed out that if you were considered to be ‘not so bright’, you are directed towards a trade:

Ahm, like when they say you're not bright, they tell you either [you] have to learn a trade or something. A trade – like metalwork

(AG.4th Frm. M. 12)

Similarly, Marge, who is a mature student and has taken a child care course, notes that it is considered to be a low status career:

It's viewed in a very bad way, but if people actually went and did the course they'd see it is not. The one I did is the highest level you can do except for degree, the highest level. And it's very, very theory based. I did a lot of theory and a lot of psychology. Cause people don't see it as a particularly ... a very academic thing, looking after children, do they?

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

However, she points out that the training for child care work is prolonged and demanding, which is not generally recognised. Plumbing and building are other examples of jobs which are often considered to require little academic ability. This UK school student disagrees with this perception:

...it's not really fair to say that they should have worse jobs or anything, maybe building, plumbing just 'coz they've got other skills. Because you don't use academic stuff as much as you use physical skills and practical skills. Er yeah, you'd have to have a fair knowledge of what you are doing, you don't have to be academically bright but you'd have to know what you're doing.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 44)

He points out that academic qualifications may not be necessary, but that different skills are needed, physical and practical ones. ‘You have to know what you are doing’.

However, some participants realise that some jobs that are perceived as low status can actually pay well, as Paul notes:

Because these days if you're an electrician and you run your own electrician business you can get like fifteen quid every hour can't you. If you get loads of people you can make loads of money. Like hairdressers as well. If you've got your own hairdressing firm you can make a lot of money doing that. It's just that the perception is that if you go to uni you get a better job when you're older. A more well-paying job.

(UK. BUS. M. 59)

Again, for Paul, it is the salary that determines the status of a job role, not whether it is academic or vocational. Another UK student, this time at college, agrees about the status of building work:

Bricklaying and stuff like that. It's a dirty job though ain't it? I just wouldn't do it. The working conditions are not good. You don't get paid as much as you should for the amount of work you're doing, unless you're independent and working for yourself. But I'd always work in an office. Smart job; clean job and getting paid quite a bit as well. Puts a lot of reputation on you.

(UK. BUS. M. 61)

For him, it isn't just the poor pay, it is the working conditions. It is not a job he'd consider; rather, he plans to work in an office, which will give him status.

Among the UK students in particular, there was a noticeable disdain for hairdressing as a career. It was considered by many that 'intelligence was not required', as Higgins points out:

'Coz you don't really need a brain to do hairdressing... I'm more like academic, like writing and you know things like that. I'd rather to go into the other family business. Go into like selling furniture and stuff like that. I'd rather do that.... I wouldn't get no enjoyment out of it [hairdressing] because it's not challenging. It's just doing like the same thing every day.

(UK. BUS. F. 69)

This perception had persisted, despite the fact that Higgin's mother owned a hairdressing salon. Similarly, Anne also states that one does not have to be 'brainy' to be a hairdresser:

No, you don't have to be particularly brainy to be a hairdresser. I mean if you were brainy you could still be a hairdresser but you don't need to be ...erm, you don't really need to work that hard, you need to work hard to get the training to be a hairdresser but you don't need like for example maths or science or technology.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 42)

She suggests that the training will be not as difficult as for someone entering mathematics of technology. On the other hand, Anne sees 'brainy' people doing:

Erm, things like managers of shops, directors, scientists, things like that.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 42)

Anne however goes on to point out that she had once wanted to be a hairdresser, but speaking to other hairdressers and learning of the poor wage which they received cause her to change her focus.

...well obviously that [money] is part of it, I used to consider being a hairdresser but I know that I can do better than that 'coz they don't get particularly good money. 'Coz I know people that are hairdressers and they all say that they'd prefer to be on a better wage.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 42)

This issue of hairdressers being poorly paid is also raised by Minnie, but it is not her only reason for not taking it up as a career:

Coz you don't get very good pay in hairdressing and I'm not really good at stuff like that, like working on other people.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 43)

Minnie realises that good 'people skills' are also required. On the whole, hairdressing as a career has received a bad press in the evidence of this study, but it is defended by Liz, a UK school student. She recognises hairdressing as a vocational career, but explains that it can also pay well:

I see it as more you're giving yourself a set path probably if you take on a vocational one. 'Coz it's hairdressers... hairdressings vocational isn't it? ...you can get lots of money or you can become good at whatever you do. It doesn't make you any different from an academic. You're just good at something different.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 39)

She sees those taking a vocational route as following more of a 'set path', perhaps referring to more clearly defined training routes, and states that taking a vocational route into employment shouldn't be considered inferior; it is just different. Again, the

notion of salary is used as a measure of how well one can do in a job role. With a hairdresser who owns her own salon being considered to earn more than the norm.

For some respondents, whether a job was for the 'bright' or not was often related to whether it required more qualifications and extended periods of study:

Yeah! You have some jobs that definitely better than others...chemistry lab technician or a pharmacist is actually better than electronics or electrical. Those jobs require lot of subjects, and also dedication and a lot of work. They have to spend three years and that's not where it ends, you know. They still have to have to do another course somewhere I think, in some other university or something.

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

Perceptions that the 'best' jobs go to the brightest individuals while more vocational type careers are for the less able were common in both the UK and Antigua.

Jack suggests that those who do not achieve academic success, perhaps because they have not worked hard at school, have no other choice but to take up a vocational career:

Yeah, there are people that don't turn up to school, like my friend Ben he used to come to school and he used to be really smart, but he like kind of trailed off a bit and started hanging around with like the wrong people and stuff now he's working somewhere, I think he's being a plumber or something and I don't think that's through choice I think that's through necessity.

(UK. Yr. 10. M. 41)

Or, as this Antiguan school student points out, those seeking a vocational career may be considered to be poorly qualified academically:

Well, I think that society sometimes looks down on those that are going to do the trade jobs. Because sometimes it doesn't pay well. And I know of instances where people would say like, that's the only job the person could get. Because they don't have enough subjects or they're not well educated so they have to go and find jobs in carpentry and those sorts of stuff. But when it comes to those classes, like the upper classes more like teaching and pasturing they think of it more highly than the trade jobs.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

In Antigua, Missie had observed a similar situation:

Because it's like the boys – most boys go to engineering... they failed, they dropped out of school, they need something to do, they go to the engineering and they get something and then – that's how it has always been.

(AG. BUS. F. 37)

Such situations help to promote the perception that vocational work is for the less able or the less committed academically. However, Jack, a UK student, received positive encouragement from his careers adviser, who suggested that some people have a natural inkling for doing vocational work due to its practical nature:

That it's more practical based and that some people... find practical stuff easier than others, where other people don't like it.

(UK. Yr. 10. M. 41)

He went on to explain how he had observed that some students, who were otherwise 'good at everything' were not very able practically:

When I did technology there are people that are really good at everything but they couldn't make a box out of wood, and then there are people that just seemed to be able to make the box really easily.

(UK. Yr. 10. M. 41)

This notion, that different job roles suit different people because of varied abilities is a positive one that can help remove some of the perceptions of the status of vocational employment.

Other participants were aware that individuals could differ in their artistic or scientific leanings and therefore would be suited to different roles:

...jobs in science, you'll have to have an intellectual brain, and writing, medicine that kind of thing but also some bright people are going to be good at artistic stuff so those jobs can be for anybody really it's just the right talent.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 44)

One UK student suggested that there were some jobs that could be taken by individuals irrespective of their education or academic abilities:

So I think there are some jobs that can be for people who are bright or people who aren't bright.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 44)

Another pointed out that some were happy doing what they were doing, that they may not aspire to a 'better' job, or to working for further qualifications:

Some... they just don't have the qualifications for working in a bank... so they take what they can get, right, they take chef. Some again, are qualified chefs and some... they just love doing it, they prefer doing cooking... some just love doing what they are doing. So you won't find them doing anything else.

(AG. BUS. F 28)

The student provided a very optimistic view, that everyone could succeed at what they wanted to do, if they tried hard enough:

I think anyone can do any job as long as they like it. I mean, different people enjoy different things, and it's not... it's in your personality, not in what class you are or who you are friends with... If someone wants to do a job, then... most of the time they'll succeed in doing it.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 46)

She goes on to say:

I've got quite a lot of friends that are quite intelligent but they want to go into things like building and plumbing, which... I think that other people think is typically for the people that aren't as brainy, but they're just as clever as anyone else.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 46)

This quotation is interesting, in that she points out that individual friends of hers are choosing vocational careers despite being 'quite intelligent'. Although she attributes the perception to others, it appears that she too believes that, because of their abilities, they perhaps should be aiming for more academic careers. There is a suggestion that she has opinions that the types of job that individuals should aim for are related to their intelligence, despite being unaware of this. She also holds views about career status. This is despite previously saying that all should be able to succeed in any job if the desire is strong.

One interesting aspect that came out of the study was that, although some participants accepted the need for vocational type courses and jobs, they suggested that they considered they were right for other people, but not for themselves. Asked whether he had considered a vocational career, 'Mr Smooth', an Antiguan student replied:

No, no... If you have a good career you – if you own your own business you safe. If you – it's according to what the person wants... Plumbing is a good job.

(AG. BUS. M. 36)

However when asked if he would be a plumber, he emphatically replied:

No!

(AG. BUS. M. 36)

Marge, a mature UK student, also points out that she would not want to work in a factory:

You know, I just want more from my life than that. I don't put people down that work in factories, it's fine for them. You know, there are many people that enjoy that sort of thing.

(UK. BUS. F.72)

She goes on to say that sometimes, individuals have no choice about where they work:

Sometimes you have to. You do what you have to do to support your family. You know, I've got two young children... wherever I have to work, I'll do it to get money for them.

(UK. BUS. F.72)

5.6.4 Summary

It was interesting to hear participants' views about the job market. The majority continually spoke of wanting to get 'a good job'. To them, the primary factor was a job that pays well, although many also wanted one that they would enjoy. Others wanted to be challenged, to gain respect, to open their own business. So although money was important it was not the sole factor. A 'good' job was seen to carry a certain amount of status and, for some, status was more important than pay. Status in this context did not just refer to academic types careers. As one participant pointed out, a vocational career could be a route to an individual becoming a manager of their own business and therefore a 'good' job. The students were sophisticated enough to know about the importance of money, but also about the distinction between a 'job' and a 'career'. Money was not enough in itself.

The ideas about job pay and status that are being put forward here are more complex than those described by Robinson (1997), which are based solely on pay. He points to those with vocational qualifications earning less than those with supposedly equivalent academic ones. This is backed up by a survey carried out in 2003, which showed that employment rates and average weekly earnings were directly related to the highest qualification achieved (ONS, 2003).

Although participants in this study seldom used the term 'vocational' to describe different types of careers, they held strong convictions about which jobs they saw as having more status. These tended to be careers which required further extended periods of study, such as bankers, doctors, pilots, professors, teachers or lawyers. They saw these jobs as prestigious and able to command respect. The status of the job tended to

be related to salary. Jobs considered low status included hairdresser, seamstress, child care worker, plumber and factory worker.

It was evident that perceptions of job status had frequently been passed on by parents. For example, one student even stated that she was not willing to do certain jobs because her family thought they were beneath her; she termed them 'lower classed jobs'. This was partly because parents tended to set high expectations for their children, often not wanting them to suffer the same hardships that they had. Cropper (1998) has also shown that perceptions of job status on the part of parents can strongly influence their offspring's career choices.

For some, working conditions had much to do with the perception of job status. Being outdoors, getting dirty (and thus needing protective clothing) and using one's hands were considered low status. One participant did consider that a bricklayer was paid reasonably well, but in his eyes, the working conditions lowered the status of the job.

Another consideration was what they would be expected to wear at work. A number of individuals wanted to work in an office because of the manner in which office staff were expected to dress. To them, this conferred a certain amount of respectability.

For many participants, different individuals were seen as being suited to different jobs in terms of their intelligence, practical skills or artistic ability. Some saw 'bright' people as being able to choose to do whatever they wish, whereas the 'not so bright' was likely to be directed towards a trade.

The high status jobs, as identified above, were considered to require individuals with an elevated intellectual capacity. On the other hand, the 'low status' jobs such as child care, plumbing and building were considered to require little academic ability. There was a noticeable disdain among the UK students for hairdressing, often (quite incorrectly) considered to be a job that required little or no skill. However not everyone held such polarised views. One student, for example, noted that while academic skills may not be required for some jobs, different skills are needed and one has to know 'what they are doing'. This view is supported by Davies and Biesta (2007). Another participant suggested that she had many friends who were 'bright', but had, for preference, chosen vocational careers.

Others were also cognisant of the fact that some of the so called low status jobs can actually pay well. This was where a tension arose, as there was a suggestion that, all things considered, it was the salary, and perhaps other working conditions, that denoted a job's status; not whether it was 'academic' or 'vocational'.

5.7 Summary of findings in relation to the theoretical framework of the study

This chapter has described the characteristics of the study population, their career aspirations, their understanding of the terms 'academic' and 'vocational', and their perceptions of the parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications and careers. In doing so, it has provided an exploration of the findings which relate to the first two aims of this study:

- To explore young peoples' employment aspirations in Antigua and the UK
- To investigate young people's attitudes towards jobs and careers

These findings are discussed in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, where the main concerns identified were:

1. There is a lack of understanding of what the term 'vocational' means.
2. Vocational courses and qualifications do not carry the same apparent value as academic courses and qualifications.
3. There is a perception that the more qualifications one attains, the better the job one is likely to get and the better will be the pay.

What was very evident was the distinct lack of a clear understanding of what the term 'vocational' means. Many of the young people had not even heard of the term and there was also ambiguity in the use of the terms 'academic' and 'vocational' as applied to careers. Despite the many vocational or academic/vocational initiatives in schools, such as NVQs and GNVQs, young people still show a lack of understanding of what the 'vocational' means and what the qualifications are attempting to achieve. Thus vocational courses are still not achieving the parity of esteem educationally.

What was significant though, was that, when an attempt was made to define the term, individual respondents suggested that vocational jobs were those that were low status,

taken up by people who had failed at school. For some, the ‘academic/vocational divide’ does exist, even if they do not recognise it in those terms.

Previous research has shown that, despite the many vocational initiatives over many years, the education system is still ‘geared up’ to academic achievement. The majority of young people wanted to gain academic qualifications, as this was what they thought (sometimes mistakenly) that employers were looking for. GNVQs, now renamed AVCEs, and later Applied GCEs, continue to be considered by students and parents as being inferior to A levels.

This lack of parity is carried forward into the labour market with the perception that a vocational job or career may pay less than one requiring academic qualifications. Participants almost universally equated a good job with a high salary, and perceived that a high salary gave status. Status tended to play a significant role in how the young people felt about a job; this was more important to them than whether the job was seen to be vocational or not. Parents had clearly influenced their children’s perceptions of job status. However, other factors such as job enjoyment, social life and culture within work, feeling challenged by the work, or being able to do the job were also important. Working conditions, including the needs to wear protective clothing or smart suits for an office were also considered a central concern, again because they were an indication of job status.

Chapter Six

MAKING CAREER CHOICES

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three it was noted that the career choices which young people make are dependent upon how much information they receive, the amount of finance available, the types of experiences they have as well as their own dreams, aspirations and realities. It was also noted that both internal and external factors come into play to influence the choices and decisions they make. Chapter Five looked at the factors which are due to individual agency or internal factors; Chapter Six will focus primarily on the external factors which influenced the career decisions of the young people in this study.

The results presented in Chapter Five show that many of the students who took part in this study had preconceived notions and assumptions about various careers and career paths. This chapter investigates where these assumptions may arise from and the effects they may have on an individual's career choice and aspirations.

The chapter begins by examining the influences on career decision-making, looking at the role of parents, siblings and other relatives, friends and peers, schools, teachers and career advisors, the media and financial influences. It then explores how choices are actually made, using the framework provided by White's (2007) choice model.

Overall, it is very clear that the influence of other individuals and other factors plays an important role in the career choice and decision-making process of young people.

6.2 Influences on young people's career decisions

The school students in Antigua and the UK who took part in the study questionnaire were asked which of a list of factors – the chance to earn money, to work for a large company, to gain a qualification - they saw as being most important to them. As Table 6.1 shows, in Antigua the majority (68.3%) saw the chance to gain a qualification as being most important to them, followed by 18.3% indicating the chance to earn money and 9.5% indicating the chance to work for a big company.

Table 6.1 Importance of employment factors

		Which one of the following do you see as being most important to you?			
		The chance to earn money %	the chance to work for a big company %	the chance to gain a qualification %	Other %
Location of Institution	Antiguan School	18.3	9.5	68.3	4.0
	UK School	46.4	4.3	39.1	10.1
	Total	28.2	7.7	57.9	6.2

In the UK the majority (46.4%) indicated that they saw the chance to earn money as being most important to them, followed by 39.1% who wanted the chance to gain a qualification, while only 7.7% indicated that the chance to work for a big company was important to them.

Clearly, the size of the organisation was not considered particularly relevant in either country, but the marked difference was that UK students were far more concerned about the chance to earn money, with the opportunity to gain a qualification being of less importance than to students in Antigua.

6.3 The influence of parents

From the questionnaires, 74.8% of Antiguan students indicated that their parents would like them to go into academic type careers compared to 5.5% who indicated that their parents would like them to go into vocational type careers; the remainder (19.7%) were unsure. On the other hand, 43.2% of the UK students indicated that they did not know, while 39.5% indicated that their parents would like them to go into academic careers and 16% vocational careers.

This asks the question as to whether the high percentage of those stating that they did not know means that they have not talked about careers with their parents as yet, or whether it is because they did not understand the distinction between the terms academic and vocational – a career in medicine, for example, could be considered to be both.

However, the research has shown that parents have a marked influence in a number of ways. For example, in the case of Katie, a female UK Year 10 student, when asked if she had been given much careers advice at school, felt that she hadn't, but was able to speak to her parents about possible options:

Not that much, no. They haven't like sat us down and had a big talk about it but cause me and my mom and dad are kinda close we sat down and we talked about all the different options what we could have took- that I could have taken and then we chose that but if there were Hair and Beauty I would have gone for Hair and Beauty.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 49)

This student had remembered a specific, formal occasion where she and her parents 'sat down' together, which is perhaps atypical. However, there is evidence that parents act not just as a source of support and encouragement, as in this example, but also as role models, as well as, knowing their offspring's capabilities and limitations, being practical and pragmatic about the possibilities available to them.

6.3.1 Parents as an example

The examples which parents set for their children, whether implicitly or explicitly, can act as very powerful sources of influence even without a word being said. Young people over the course of their lives observe their parents and listen to them talk about their work and careers; sometimes they will wish to follow a similar route. Such is the case with Davis, whose father is an electronics engineer who has played a great part in influencing him to take up the trade:

My father is an electronics engineer and I wanted to do what he does.

(AG. ENG. M. 27)

Davis goes on to point out that his father has not made any kind of suggestions to him about electronics being the route which he thinks he should take or that he would like to see him take it. Rather, it is the manner in which he sees his father go about his work that appears to fascinate him and which he seemingly admires and wishes to emulate:

Ahm, you know, he just - he sits there and he like he knows everything he's doing and he just working hard.

(AG. ENG. M. 27)

When asked how a young person coming up would decide on what they wanted to do, Davis indicates that the observation of others has an important role to play in the choice and decision making process of young people. For him it was observing his father doing electronics that drew him into that field of study:

Ahm I guess it's based on what you see other people doing you know. Like your family members, you see them doing it so maybe. That's me, you know, I saw my father doing it... so maybe I think I was actually pulled towards that field.

(AG. ENG. M. 27)

This was likewise noted by Buggs in reference to whether people out of various classes go into certain types of jobs:

There are some exceptions, but ahm I think children see what their parents do and they imitate.

(UK.BUS. M. 74)

In a somewhat similar fashion to Davis's experience, although not stated as explicitly, Cornflakes an Antiguan 5th form female said that her mother had been a teacher 'for twenty nine or something years' and that this had played a significant role in influencing her to want to become a teacher also. Likewise, Jane also expresses a similar sentiment. She believes that her interest in physics is influenced by her father being a scientist involved with physics:

Er, I'm interested in physics side of things quite a lot, I guess like that's something to do with family influences as well coz my dad's, well, he's kind of like a scientist, he does lots of er testing things, he's quite heavily involved in kinda physics side of things...

(UK. Yr.11. F. 38)

Bob, like Davis, was also introduced to carpentry by his father. Even a fear of heights was not discouraging him from following in his father's footsteps:

My Father is a carpenter...I had actually started to learn my carpentry from him, then I went on other job sites during the vacation and so on to actually enhance myself. ...I was a kind of scared of heights, but now I'm actually trying to overcome it now.

(AG. ENG. M.)

A UK student 'Hot Sauce' has grown up with both parents having owned a Chinese take away and the experience of having both parents as chefs has inspired him to also become a chef:

Ahm, my mum's a chef... She's worked in take aways for must be about fifteen years now. She owned a take away. He [Dad] used to own a take away but now he's sold it... I think I have picked it up from my parents, being a chef.

(UK.CAT. M. 83)

For Geoffrey the aspiration to go to sixth form and then to college has been influenced by his perception of his father being able to earn a good salary because he had been to university. While this may not be the only influencing factor, having his father as an example, on a good salary, has seemingly reinforced his pragmatic ideas:

Well, my dad... I know he gets a pretty good salary and he's studied at university... I just think there are certain qualifications you need to obtain from going to university to get into certain jobs and higher salary jobs you know. Well I mean it's like the next step in education you know you get you A' levels at sixth form and then move on to do masters and stuff at university. I mean yeah my dad has been doing so he has got masters

(UK. Yr.11. M. 40)

However, the reverse can also act as a source of example. In the case of May, her influence stems from her mother and father not having been able to go to college. This example makes her determined to go to college so that her parents can be proud of her. She also sees it as a natural progression from high school:

Because my Mother didn't go and my father didn't go and I want them to be proud of me, so... and its something I always wanted like – you left high school - that's the only thing left there is to do; go to college.

(AG. BUS. F. 32)

Clearly, the need to please her parents, or make them proud, is important to her.

However, while parents may be examples to their children, they may not always wish their offspring to mirror their career path. Te-Marie, an Antiguan student, points out that even if she wanted to become a contractor like her father he probably would not approve of it:

What would he say? He probably, wouldn't want me to do it. ' Cause he tell me oh aim higher or something like that, I think you can do better than me, you know things like that.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 4)

Young people develop attitudes and behaviours from observing the attitudes and behaviours of their parents as well as from listening to what they say. Such attitudes need not be directly addressed to them but may be interpreted through inadvertent

inferences and mannerisms. What these young people learn is not deliberate but instead picked up through idiosyncratic personal interpretations. As Te-Marie continued:

Umm yeah, well I don't know. He never told me so but I think that – cause my sister worked for him when she finished high school before she went away to college and what she was doing for him was not really like in the contracting thing, she was doing like his pay roll and stuff like that. I was saying that maybe he could get her into the more working part bring her on the site put on some boots you know cast a floor or something. Like he would bring my brother to work with him but ...

(AG.4th Frm. F. 4)

It could of course be, in this instance, that Te-Marie's father considers that this is not a suitable job for a girl. However as is highlighted in the quotation below, the desire to follow one's parent is not always carried through; sometimes when one actually starts doing the job, it turns out not to be what it at first appeared to be and thus a career change is made:

I've only just recently wanted to become [a property developer] ... I did want to be an accountant. My dad started off ... I went on work experience when I was sixteen with my dad and just did what he did and I found it... I could do it but I never enjoyed it really.

(UK. BUS. M. 71)

Many times the environment in which a child/young person grows up can have an effect on their choice of career. For example, Joseph's mother is not employed in the catering field but, as pointed out below, it was his exposure to cooking and baking at home that aroused his interest. This also highlights the fact that hobbies and other interests of one's own or others, may also lead to careers:

...My mum did a lot of cooking at home, like baking cakes and stuff like that and I used to always help her. And like I thought to myself what am I going to do when I leave School? I thought, well I'm not good at English and Maths, writing down stuff - I couldn't do that. So I thought I'd have to do something practical. So I just came here and I thought yea, I'll do this for a bit and got into it and I love it now.

(UK. CAT. M. 81)

This shows a connection between personal experience and the awareness of a career, as well as an indication of the thought processes involved in deciding what areas not to follow, based on Joseph's perceptions of his abilities.

To summarise, there are many examples of parents acting as role models, in that their children, having observed and often admired them at work, have wished to emulate

them and follow a similar career path. Or they may consider that they have inherited similar skills and abilities. Some parents however, would not wish their offspring to follow their footsteps, having higher career aspirations for them.

6.3.2 Parents and their pragmatism

Most parents will be ambitious for their children and want them to do well, advising them to work hard at school, obtain good grades and get a good job. Knowing their capabilities, strengths and weaknesses, they may also be able to offer sound advice on career choices, or steer them away from careers they perceive to be unsuitable. Other parents may adopt a more *laissez faire* attitude, wanting their children to be happy above all things. Often, parents will manifest a mixture of the two.

Asked what his mother thought about what he was planning as a career, Michael, an Antiguan engineering student responded:

She's happy with it. She actually prefers it yeah, to most other things; she keeps on telling me that everybody needs computers and stuff like that so, and it something that I happen to be good at, so I might as well stick with it.

(AG. ENG. M. 24)

Michael's mother is here reiterating a general perception that 'everyone needs computers' and therefore he will always be employable. Asked if he would say that he had been influenced by his mother Michael replied:

Yeah, I think so.

(AG. ENG. M. 24)

Tisha, who planned to leave Antigua after completing her education, notes:

My parents influence me to further my education here before I go overseas, and I think it is a good idea to do that.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 3)

Tisha went on to explain that her parents didn't just want her to do well, but that they wanted to be proud of her, and consider her to be an ambassador for her country:

Like, they usually tell me like I want you to get a good education, I want you to know what you suppose to know here so when you go overseas you can show them that people from the Caribbean know what they're talking about and they know how to do jobs well.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 3)

The importance of parental pride is a recurring theme, especially in Antigua. One student, 'Skill', when being asked about advice given by his mother, makes a similar comment, explaining why he has undertaken a business studies course:

No, no, no, she didn't like force me. I just wanted to just make her feel proud. Because she used to say this... that when she used to walk in town people used to ask her about her two big sons and the only thing she could say that they working right now. Because back in school days they weren't excelling in school. So I'm here now to make her feel proud. So that when she sees those persons on the road she can tell them that right now her son just acquired an associate degree and so.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

'Ghost' noted that the advice he had received about careers came from his parents.

When asked what sort of suggestions he had received he replied:

Well they tell me right now the best type of – the best area to follow is like engineering, because engineers always get jobs and make plenty money you know that kind of stuff.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 10)

Clearly this was pragmatic advice, based on employability and salary. Pragmatic parental advice can also help a student be more realistic about the possibilities of success in professions known to lack security. For example, during her interview 'Demon Child', a UK student, had noted that she wished to become an actor, but would choose forensic science if acting was not possible. When asked whether she had spoken to her parents about what she want to do, she stated that her mother:

...she said that Forensic Science is a good job cause I might not always get acting jobs... She doesn't think it's a good job... She goes like - you could always fail at it. You could lose your job and you might not get hired.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 52)

This reveals that her mother was not very much in agreement with her going into acting as she thought it was not a very secure career but was more positive about forensic science; whether the latter suggestion had come from the parent, as a suitable alternative, is not clear.

Similarly, when asked about what her parents thought about her ideas for a career, Hanah revealed that as far as she was concerned, they did not take it seriously. From the reply she gives it can be seen that her parents have taken a rather more pragmatic approach to her choice of film directing, possibly seeing it as far fetched and would rather she chose something more realistic:

I don't actually think they take it that seriously. Ahm I keep saying how when I have directed my first film I'll do this and that... so to them they expect me to change my mind.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 56)

There is no doubt that individuals are judged, classified or characterised by the jobs they do, and as such some jobs are considered to have a higher status than others. Individual attitudes to careers vary and some parents may view some careers as being beneath their children. They want to take pride in what they become. For example, Anne notes that, while speaking to her mother about careers, she told her that she had an interest in becoming a hairdresser. She encountered a direct opposition to that suggestion, as her mother thought that she could do better:

Erm, well, when I first told my mum that I might be a hairdresser then she said that she thought I could do better and but she thinks psychologist is a good job. But she says I will have to work very hard to get there. No, its not that she didn't think it was good enough she just thought I could... Coz she thinks I'm... I should do a job that's more intellectual and academic.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 42)

Lucy also notes that her mother considers she is capable of being 'more' than a beautician:

Well, I told her that I want to be a beautician and she said that's a good idea but she thinks that ... she thinks that I'm capable of more than that but that's what I really want to do and you know it's quite a ... a lot of people are starting to do it now, and it's getting ... competitions getting more and more but I don't know. I have, I have quite good people skills and I'm friendly and I like talking to people and I enjoy when I go to work on a Saturday I wouldn't miss it for ... I don't get paid very much but that doesn't matter I just love going there and it's really fun, and I learn, I keep learning little bits along the way and just really like it.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 45)

This is an interesting quotation. Lucy clearly enjoys her part-time job and wants to make it her career, and has thought about her various skills and personal qualities that suit the role. However, her mother shows her disapproval from a pragmatic stand point. She is more ambitious for her daughter. Lucy, though, is more determined to follow her chosen career path and believes that if she was to force the issue, her mother would give her support:

She just thinks that I'm capable of more... I think she wants me to do something that's more ... involves a bit more thinking or ... I don't know, I don't really know what it is but I know that if I do, if I turn round to her and say mum that's what I'm doing she'll be fine. ...I just think she thinks that all that learning you do is just going to waste if you're going to be a beautician. But that doesn't really bother me [laughs].

(UK. Yr.10. F. 45)

Another UK student, Raji, highlights the conflicting views that can be held by parents and children, for whereas she states that her mum would not be pleased if she was to become a hairdresser because she does not think of it as being a 'good' job she, on the other hand, likes hairdressing:

Not quite because she thinks that it's not a kind of good job whereas I do because I like doing hairdressing.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 55)

It is likely that parents will always ultimately support what their children choose to do, but it is clear that, despite this, their offspring will always know what they actually think about their chosen career.

The high expectations held by parents can be of long standing. Although Holly says that her parents do not really have an influence on her wanting to become a physician, she points out that there has always been a sort of expectation (at least on her mother's part) for her to go into an academic type of career:

I mean I know my mum's always ... I don't know, since I was little she's always thought of me as becoming a doctor and my dad's not really ... he's just happy at whatever I want to do.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 46)

Holly goes on to explain:

I don't know, coz sh... well my theory is, she's always wanted to be better, coz she used to move around a lot when she was younger. She didn't finish school, she left when she was 16 and just went into the same profession as her mum and I think she wanted me to do something better than what, than hairdressing what she originally went into.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 46)

So once again the issue of wanting better for their child is displayed, in this case, possibly because the parent herself had not fulfilled her potential. It has already been noted above that parents may not wish their children to follow in their footsteps but

would rather see them take up a higher status career. This may be against their child's wishes, as shown by Minnie:

Erm, she'll ask me what I want to do when I'm older and what I want to do when I've left school and she wants me to go to the sixth form here. She thinks it's a good school, she thinks it's right for me, but I don't really want to.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 43)

Many of the above examples indicate that the mother appears to play the more prominent role in helping choose (or commenting upon) career choices. This may be because mothers are around more, or may be single parents. For Anne, however, the advice about careers came from both parents, who tried to instil in her a need to apply a sense of balance between the salary a job will pay and how much she is likely to enjoy doing it:

Erm, from like people's experience, like what my mum and dad... they just said, because they'd like me to go far in life and earn as much money as I can. They don't think everything's about money because they want me to have a job that I enjoy, but having a job that you enjoy and earns a lot of money is better than a job that you enjoy and doesn't earn a lot of money.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 42)

This is essential advice. Like many others, Efa's parents wish her to do well and obtain a well paid job, but they also recognise the necessity for her to have enjoyment in what she does:

Well they would say most likely choose one that you would enjoy first of all, and pays well.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 9)

On the other hand, Amie notes that her parents have had some say, but the final decision will be left to her:

Well they play a role in it, but it's really my mind set really. How I think. How I think I should go about doing this.

(AG. BUS. M. 34)

In summary, parents almost unanimously stressed the importance of a good education and the importance of obtaining qualifications at school and at college, and perhaps going on to university. They advocated jobs that were likely to be in demand, such as computing and engineering, as well as those that commanded a good salary. Parental pride in their son or daughter's chosen career was also in evidence. On the other hand, they also wanted their offspring to be happy in their choice of career. Parents showed

their pragmatism in advising against ‘unsuitable’ careers such as acting or film directing, but generally did this in a non-judgmental way, by suggesting possible, sensible alternatives. There was evidence of parents considering that their offspring could do better than their choice of career (hairdressing and beauty therapy being specific examples) or having high expectations generally, especially where they, as parents, had not had similar opportunities. This suggests that personal ambitions and disappointments can be placed on the children.

6.3.3 Parents as support

It is a natural instinct for parents to want the best for their children. However, as identified above, parents may want to live their lives through their children, which places pressure on young people if they want to please their parents. This notion of parents seeming to want to live their lives through their children is highlighted by the following student, who sees her father as providing a bit too much (as she perceives it) support at times, particularly in the area of science:

I get slightly too much from my dad. Dad's very ... me and my brother aren't that into science. But mum and dad just absolutely love science so sometimes it can go over the top sort of with revision now, its for the GCSEs you can see there's a slight bit of difficulty going there coz he wants to do revision with me whereas I'd like to do it by myself. But I know if I want help that I can always have it. They'll stop what they're doing to help me with whatever.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 39)

On the other hand, Minnie admits that although there was some forward thinking in terms of choosing her subjects her main reason for choosing Art was because she would be able to get help from her mother:

I chose Art coz I like doing Art and I can get help from my mum coz my mum used to be an Art teacher.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 43)

Another student shows how her parents encourage her to complete her school course work:

They're fine with it. They- they've been supportive and to push me in some ways they push me to say right what about getting some course work done - and I do do it and they have become- yeah they push me to it.

(UK. Yr.11. M. 57)

Geiss, an Antiguan student, in talking about what her parents would say if she was to fail her exams, it became obvious that she is under pressure to do well and does not want to disappoint her parents and therefore would be willing to try again:

Huh! They'll maybe be disappointed but they would say maybe I can try again.

(AG. BUS. F. 31)

Geiss also pointed out that her parents were the ones who encouraged her to go to college. However, she noted that although her parents would have preferred if she had continued directly into college they were willing to support her decision to take a break after finishing school. She also points out that as well as her choice of field of study another major support was also in the form of financing her college tuition:

Well, they wanted me to go college since I finished school but I was like, I want to take a little break still because I was going school five years. So when I decided I want to go the next year they agree with me and tell me yeah. My father paid my college fee for me so. Is accounts I wanted to do, I told them is that I wanted to do, so they tell me ok I can do it.

(AG. BUS. F. 31)

Not all parents take their support or influence as far. Some, whilst supporting their child's choices, may suggest a similar, but more high status career, as Scott shows:

...and then I says one day I want to be a graphic designer and they says it sounds good, it sounds - and they says what about architect and I say s- and I explained about you have to do all this A Levels and you have to do all this and they says well it's up to you Scott and I says well I don't want to get into that again - into the maths again and all that and they says well that's fine with me - if that's what you want to be, if that's what you want to be just you go for it.

(UK. Yr.11. M. 57)

When he explains why he thinks this is unsuitable, they are happy to accept his decision. Taz indicates a similar experience, where his father runs a business and may have wanted him to join him:

Me dad's alright. He did want me to probably go into the business at the beginning, but I'm not like that. I not practical, like with joinery and stuff like that...

(UK. CAT. M. 80)

He goes on to say:

They've never really pressured me into doing anything that I don't want to. But you know they've also supported me. Well like I say I didn't have a good time in the first year but like I'm probably only still at college partly because of them...

(UK. CAT. M. 80)

His parents are clearly supporting him in what he wants to do, perhaps despite their own disappointment at him not joining his father's business.

Earlier, it was highlighted that Davis's father was an example to him in the way in which he went about his work, and although not insisting or suggesting to Davis that he should go into electronics he has been supportive in whatever Davis wishes to do:

No, I came to him and asked him about it and he says if it fascinates me then I should go. He never really particularly say go to electronics or go this department or that. He just asked me what I wanted to do.

(AG. ENG. M. 27)

'Cornflakes', an Antiguan student, highlights that one of the key areas in the way in which parents support their children is simply through giving them moral support in what they wish to do:

Well, basically, although they play an important role in my decision making, they're behind me or beside me to help me make the proper decision, they won't make it for me. And if I said that I don't want to go to A' levels they would – they would ask why, and I'll tell them why I don't want to go. But they would not say I have to do so and so.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

Many of the young people in this study when asked about what their parents thought of their choices or career aspirations indicated that their parents were happy for them to do whatever they wanted and would support them in whatever way they could. Typical replies were:

They're happy for me whatever I do. If they see I enjoy it then they'll try and help me in whatever I do, sort of. ... I swapped from health and social and there wasn't any negativity there from my parents, but they said coz that's a ... I think that's a GNVQ its not an actual A level. And they said if you want to do it then fair enough we'll help you with it. But they thought it would be better to do 4 A levels. ... when I'd chosen it they were saying its fine if you want to do it you go for it.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 39)

Although this student feels that her parents accepted her choice of a GNVQ rather than A levels, they conveyed the message that they would have preferred her to do A levels.

They have accepted the choice, but made their feelings clear. Other parents showed more acceptance of their children's career choices, as the following quotes indicate:

She goes "Well at the end of the day it's your choice. Really it's up to you". She's given me advice on it like well- really you want to be a hairdresser and all this you've got to get your head down in school if you wanna do that job. Yeah, they're not bothered really as long as I'm happy with what I'm doing and I'm safe. I'm the only thing they've got really.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 49)

No they say it's up to me what I want to be when I'm older just as long as I stick at something.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 50)

They – they don't mind. They're happy if I do anything really.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 53)

They're (pause) like with me on it. I have made my decision and they're not trying to change it. They're just saying well go for it then.

(UK. Yr.11. M. 54)

The responses show a wide range of support, from parents pushing their unwilling children to do homework, encouraging them to do so, and encouraging them to do well in their exams. Some suggest that their offspring aim higher, for example taking architecture rather than graphic design, but nevertheless fully support them and are tolerant of their career choice. Other parents adopt a more *laissez faire* attitude, and support their children in whatever they want to do. Students may be aware that their parents are disappointed, for example in their not choosing to enter the family business, but they still feel that their parents are behind them.

6.3.4 Parents as encouragement

As well as supporting or tolerating their offspring's career choices, some parents will take this a step further, and encourage them in what they want to do. They may instigate ideas for careers, make recommendations and inspire or stimulate their children to study further and aim higher. For example, in explaining her reason for going to college, Beverly, like many of the other respondents, says that in doing so it will allow her to be able to get a proper job. This she further defines as enabling her to be able to earn 'good money' which will allow her to live comfortably. She explains that her mother was also a primary reason for her attending college:

Well she always tell us make sure we go higher in life and even if after high school I wanted to stop there. She wouldn't allow it. So I have to go. She's feeding me so I have to do what she says (laughs).

(AG. ENG. F. 26)

Similarly Geiss notes that part of her reason for going to college was her parents pushing her to go:

Well I wanted to maybe study, get a higher education. Make a future for myself, go to school, college then go to study after. But mostly it was like my parents, they pushing me to like go college, get an education. Because mostly without it like I'm not really much. Ok, my parents pushing me like to go college, cause it's like without education I don't amount to much in this world.

(AG. BUS. F. 31)

This type of encouragement occurs irrespective of employment background. Beverly's parents had well paying jobs, her mother being an auditor and her father a retired hospital statistician. While in the case of Geiss, her father was a construction worker and her mother was unemployed. None the less, even with the difference in social economic status both sets of parents wanted their children to go to college.

Parents may encourage their children to achieve to prevent them undergoing the same or similar hardships which they, the parents, had to endure because of their lack of educational attainment. While it may act as a motivator for some, it can act as a demotivator for others. At times the insecurities of parents and their need to relive their lives through their children can exert pressure into choosing particular careers. Parents want children to take particular routes in order to achieve their own agendas. It could be argued that this is not fair on the child because children will have their own opinions and aspirations. As Davis points out:

I know some people's parents, they will come and say you, you are going to be a lawyer and that's it. You know they just tell them that, John you're going to be a lawyer so they just - I guess the parents instil it in them that that is what they want them to do...

(AG. ENG. M. 27)

Many of the respondents did speak of being pushed. This poses the question, is this pushing a form of encouragement or is it nagging? In Sue's case, her mother, who is a beach vendor, means well and does not wish her to have to undergo the same tough lifestyle as she has had to endure:

Well, my parents are not rich. That's why. And they push me to do my best. Like in school, they will ask me about my home work, assignments, especially my mother.

(AG. BUS. F. 29)

Shenelle also noted that she was pushed by her mother:

... yeah she pushes me. Because she didn't have that kind of education but she wants me to have it. ...She tell me that like, if I can see that she didn't get to finish high school or go to college and the types of jobs she get and she don't want that for me she want me to get a good job and able to earn good money and everything.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 5)

Shenelle, however, does understand why her mother is doing this, as she goes on to say:

Cause she didn't have it and she want me to have it and I can see that she's trying her best so I can have it. I don't want to disappoint her or anything. And she know that I want it so she pushes me.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 5)

Shenelle points out that some parents push their children hard because they feel like they themselves did not reach their full potential. They will do everything within their power to ensure that their children do not make the same mistakes as themselves but instead strive to achieve their full potential. However, it also demonstrates that young people may be under pressure so as not to disappoint their parents.

The most powerful examples of this came from respondents in Antigua, and it was more likely to be the mother who provided this encouragement. Dominique provides another example:

She from the time I was little has encouraged me because she knows that she hasn't got the education that I should be getting. So she encourages me no matter what it takes to do what I have to do and not to depend upon anybody...I'm supposed to be self dependent and to study my work, know what I have to do and do it.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

Asked how her mother encouraged her, Dominique goes on to say:

By lecturing me basically. Getting other people to speak to me, try to get sense into me and tell me to do my work. She also like send me to classes. Try to motivate me. Push me a lot.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

Dominique understands perfectly why her mother is pushing her to succeed:

Because she never got the education that I'm getting now. She doesn't want me to do anything that is on the same line of work with her's or ... she wants me to be way above her.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

Despite her daughter's understanding, one might question whether this can still be considered to be encouragement, or whether undue pressure is being exerted in this case. When asked whether she had ever felt under pressure, Princess, another Antiguan student, replied:

I wouldn't say pressure but, my mommy, she – my mother she just – she would like constantly like push me by telling me I must do certain things but I wouldn't say she really pressure me cause if I don't do good she would just like talk to me, help me in my school work and so on, and my father he does the same.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 15)

Princess did not perceive this as pressure as she felt supported even when she did not succeed in her school work.

Also it should be noted that parents may not necessarily share the same views, thus leaving one parent more in agreement with the young person's views than the other. It is usually the female parent who pushes more. This point was brought home by Efa when she was asked which one of her parents would be more upset if she didn't go to college:

My mother, because my father believes in allowing us to make our own decisions. Yeah, my mother she would be more upset.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 9)

Although most of the evidence of 'pushy mothers' has come so far from Antigua, it is also prevalent in the UK, as shown by Lisa. Lisa admits that it was the encouragement of her mother that initially caused her to start the business course at college and that this has now opened her eyes to other opportunities:

Ahm, initially I started the course because mum pushed me into it coz I really didn't know what I wanted to do after high school. But now that I've seen the opportunities that I can have while doing the business course I was thinking of maybe starting off as an office junior or something working my way up... And then... maybe branch out into my own business.

(UK. BUS. F. 73)

As well as being encouraged to take up particular courses or careers young people can be encouraged by their parents not to take up a particular course or career path.

'Bugs', a UK student, has a father who owns a small mechanical engineering business. However, his father has encouraged him to seek a 'good office job' as an alternative:

Ahm, he told me not to. He ahm ... he said I should go get a good office job. Says I don't want to be working on call twenty four hour a day, and out in the cold.

(UK. BUS. M. 74)

The father suggesting 'a good office job' could mean that he saw the office job as being of a higher status than a mechanic, and therefore did not see being a mechanic as good enough for his son. Liz, a UK student, cautions against parents pushing their children too hard, into jobs they are not suited either academically or personally:

...some parents do pressure them and then they'll go off the rails and just think 'No I don't want to do it. Or you might just have the case that they're really interested in cars and they could become a really good mechanic... sort of really high up. So I think people, I still think people choose what they want to do and get where they want if they try hard enough.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 39)

She considers that if parents are too authoritarian, too much pressure could cause young people to rebel, or 'go off the rails'. Wisely, she suggests that young people should be allowed to follow their interests, and could work their way up into a more prestigious work role, a 'high up' mechanic, which would presumably please their parents.

Other young people may have unknowingly been influence by their parents to the extent that they paraphrase them. For example, when asked if her parents had any influence on her planning on going to college and university, Hanah notes:

Ahm my parents are - are obviously encouraging me... It's not like I must go to university but, ahm, they just want what's best for me and I know that going to university would benefit me a lot.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 56)

Javed says the same:

I wanted to get a higher education, I wanted to go to university- and get a degree and get a better job for myself. I didn't want to be working round in a mill or something like that. Then my parents as well thought it was right for me to go to college. So, it's a bit of both really. My parents pushed me a bit as well. But I personally felt I needed to go to do something further in life. Because you can't succeed in life without education.

(UK. BUS. M. 77)

Parents encourage their children in a number of ways regarding their career choices. Parents appear to persuade them to stay on in further or higher education; interestingly this is irrespective of the parents' employment status and own educational achievement. There is evidence that this encouragement may have come about as a result of parents feeling that they had not reached their own education or employment potential, and that they did not want their children to miss out on opportunities or make the mistakes that they had done, in not seizing such opportunities. This was particularly true of mothers; fathers tended to be more *laissez faire*. It was also much more prevalent in Antigua than in the UK. Participants recognised when this was happening and were very understanding of their parents' position. There is a danger that this could place unwelcome pressure on the young person to achieve, or perhaps to pursue a career for which he or she was not suited in an attempt not to disappoint parents.

Sometimes, the young people expressed sentiments that could well have originated with their parents, such as *'without education I don't amount to much in this world'* or *'you can't succeed in this world without education'*. This could mean that these parents have successfully brought their offspring round to their way of thinking.

6.3.5 Summary – parents as choice influencers

Thus there are many examples of instances where the young people in this study indicated that their career choices and decisions were influenced in one way or another by their parents. These influences have come mainly by way of young people observing their parents and listening to comments made by them (whether explicitly or implicitly) about various careers/jobs. However, it must be noted that it is not just what their parents say directly about career choices but also their more indirect 'off the cuff remarks', their examples, general attitudes and the way in which the young person interprets them.

It is clear from the above findings that parents, as choice influencers, have a powerful effect on their children. This was also noted by Otto and Call (1985) and Middleton and Loughhead (1993). In this research parents have been shown to influence in several different ways - they can act as role models, where a child has observed a parent (and

often admired them) in their work, or skills have been learnt from childhood at their side. Michelle *et al* (1979) and Kidd (1984) also noted these effects.

As also identified by De Ruyter (2007), parents showed a pragmatic side – they want the best for their children and would therefore emphasise the importance of a good education, encouraging them to stay on a school or go to college. Additionally they would suggest jobs that were both achievable for their children (knowing their strengths and weaknesses) and were practical in terms of developing skills which were likely to be in demand in the long term. They also made sensible suggestions when their offspring aspired to more unattainable careers such as film directing. Unlike Jones *et al's* (2004) findings, no differences were observed in terms of social class and encouragement to enter further education and training.

One of the most contentious areas that arose in the literature was where parental encouragement could be perceived as direction, or a source of pressure (Jones *et al*, 2004; Blenkinsop *et al*, 2006). Jones *et al* were especially concerned that excessive parental pressure could be ‘counterproductive’ – presumably suggesting that young people would then deliberately steer away from the choices made by their parents. There was no evidence of this in this study. While this did undoubtedly happen (especially, it appears, in Antigua), the young people concerned were fully aware of it, and the reasons why it occurred, and showed maturity in responding to it. Participants in this study wanted to please their parents and for them to feel proud of them; thus they did on the whole comply with suggestions made, for example to remain in education and training, or were able to negotiate choices that both parents and offspring were satisfied with.

The *laissez faire* attitude, also identified by Jones *et al*, 2004 was shown by some parents, but there was no evidence that this had resulted in a loss of ‘confidence, maturity or experience’, in the young people in this study, as they all appeared to be making rational, reasoned career choices.

6.4 The influence of siblings and other relatives

Relatives, especially older siblings, can have an influential impact on career choice and decision making. As with parents, they can act as role models for a specific career:

Yes I was partly encouraged...my brother is an electrician, so I could go with him and learn the basics and so on. So I actually knew a part of the work before I went in.

(AG. ENG. M. 22)

Other older siblings may provide more practical help by describing the decision making processes that they themselves went through:

I've had some talks with my sisters, on their careers and why they chose their careers. They said because they basically sat down and they thought about it and they examined the subjects that they had and the subjects that they needed to pursue that career and they just went for what they wanted.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 3)

This would be very helpful in describing an appropriate route to take, and be supportive to a younger sister.

Or, as in the case of Sue, young people can be encouraged by a sibling to go into a career for other reasons. Sue's older sister pointed out that this is a career that should pay well:

...She told me that accountants make a lot of money, and if you want to make a lot of money try and be an accountant; study accounts.

(AG. BUS. F. 29)

The sister then went on to provide practical advice:

Well she told me if I want to be an accountant, go for it. If I want money go for it. And she told me that the department of Business is offering Associate degree in Accounting. Start off with that and then you can work your way up. Start off with the associate degree, and then you can work your way up. So she push me to go to the [name of college].

(AG. BUS. F. 29)

Advice is often provided about careers that pay well. For example, despite this elder brother not finishing his own schooling, he appears to have plenty of advice for this participant, his younger brother, who initially wanted to become a teacher:

it was like my brother telling me if you're going to college make sure you're studying business because that's what – in the working world out there that what it pertains to, business. ...he would tell me that he know that teaching is good and everything but most of the times teaching don't pay... So he was telling me the best thing to do was maybe to open my own business but you would have to work in that same field for like a few years before you can obtain the capital needed to start your own business.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

In a number of cases, both in Antigua and the UK, young people simply chose to do a course or follow a particular career path because one or more of their siblings was following that course or career. For example when asked why she did not want to go on to take A levels, ‘Cornflakes’, an Antiguan 5th form student said:

Because I just don't want to. I guess sometimes the fact that my sister and my brother went to commercial. They went to this school; they went commercial. But although it's like following in their footsteps like [I] want to go to commercial.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

Likewise, when asked what had persuaded him to go to college Francis states:

Well, my sister is going to [name of College] A' levels at the moment.

(AG.4th Frm. M. 12)

Francis further states that he knew that he wanted to become an accountant from being in the first form at school, and so that made him choose to do accounts. When asked what made him choose accountancy he states:

My sister was doing accounts and I always enjoy money, making money (laughs).

(AG.4th Frm. M. 12)

Helen, a Year 11 UK student also mentioned that she was influenced by her sister which led her into wanting to do media, probably into directing if she could go that far:

Ahm I'd probably say my sister got me into it cause she- she ahm took the same course as I want to take. Ahm I've just – whenever I watch a film I always think of better ways to improve it and I always think of ideas to make films and stuff so...

(UK. Yr.11. F. 53)

Similarly for Hubert the impetus to take up a business course was in part due to his brother having done business:

...my brother was doing ... well he was already at university I think. He was already doing business and ICT and stuff and I did kind of understand it... and I know that the course ... what was needed in there and I thought I'd give it a go.

(UK. BUS. M. 70)

He also goes on to note that his brother played an instrumental support role in getting him into the course by going to the careers office with him:

Yeah, I came to the careers place in the [name of college] place. He came with me. I told them about me and what I wanted to do; my options with them; he put his input in and we came to this decision. He was a real big help.

(UK. BUS. M. 70)

There is other evidence for older siblings providing support in going into further education and training. For example, Antonio sees his older brother and sister as having inside knowledge of college life and therefore as a source of information to help him 'learn the ropes'. This first hand knowledge is often quite specific and detailed and can make a marked impression on the younger sibling:

Ahm, they tell me, seriously it's hard and sometimes and so the teachers just ain't providing you with everything you need...

(AG.5th Frm. M. 17)

And similarly Tisha notes the encouraging remarks of her sisters:

Well I have one sister who went to A levels and one that was supposed to go... They just tell me it's not that difficult to get into A levels or to be a good student at A levels, the only thing you have to do is study and be capable of learning and put yourself out to learn. Yeah I've been influenced...

(AG.4th Frm. F. 3)

On the other hand, siblings can also act as negative influences and deter other siblings from the course or career path which they had initially considered. It is evident from the quote below that Bart has watched his brother carefully and has decided that he does not want to follow in the same path:

...when he used to be studying and stuff I used to look [at] what he was studying and stuff and it looked really boring...It is like confusing and stuff. And then also the job he's doing it's not much got to do with aeronautical engineering... he wanted to do aeroplanes and stuff but then he didn't do it. He's like working in an oil company place.

(UK. BUS. M. 78)

Having seen how difficult the course was, and how hard his brother has had to work, and yet has not really achieved his ideal role, Bart can be said to be weighing up the cost benefits of taking up such a career path and deciding against it.

Roo is also being influenced by the experiences of his older brother and sister for a different reason. Both of his older siblings 'dropped out' of school:

I liked the fact that how I was able to do certain subjects and so forth. I liked it also because ahm, I am the only child at home, cause my sister dropped out at [name] School. My brother dropped out at [name] School. Yeah, so I practically liked it because I used their – I don't want to use that word – that word sound – their – you know like when you mess-up or something – as a motivation.

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

Their experiences have led to this younger sibling trying to avoid the pitfalls made by the older siblings and wanting to do better. This competitive rivalry between siblings, as one sibling tries to equal or better the achievements of another sibling is a frequent theme. For example, Francis's explanation of his need to be as academically successful as his sister reveals this:

Yes, because if she set a role high, I'll have to follow under it. So suppose for CXC she passed about all and then has all 1s, I would have to try and get all 1s as well... she got six 1s and two 2s. So I would have to – for me to feel nice I would have to get all 1s.

(AG.4th Frm. M. 12)

However, this competition can become a source of pressure on individuals as Skill points out:

...it's a burden on me to finish my schooling – my education - because my older brothers... they didn't finish school. They dropped out of school and went to look for work. So it was like a pressure on me now to be the one to finish school. So that's a little bit of pressure that I'm getting from the family right now, you know.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

Although parents and siblings probably have the greatest influence on young people's career choice and decision making, other family members may also play a role.

Dimitry, for example, explains that his aspiration to go on to A levels was influenced by the encouragement given to him by his grandfather:

Well, when I was younger, my grandfather always used to tell me aim for nothing less than the top right, so, I think that A level to me is like the highest part of the college, so yeah.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 8)

Jimmy notes that he was influenced to follow a specific career by his grandfather:

To just to follow my granddad because he was one. He was a fire fighter and I've seen him do it and I just thought I'd like to become a fire fighter.

(UK. Yr.11. M. 54)

Similarly, Jason's interest in becoming a soldier has been developed by listening to his grandfather talk about his time in the army:

Well it were like listening to me - when me granddad were telling me when he were in the army. He'd tell me all the good times he were having; about him going to different countries and stuff like that.

(UK. IT. M. 65)

On the other hand, Raji wants to become a 'police lady' but her granddad is against the idea as he fears for her safety:

My granddad use - use to because he thought that I would get shoot and then my uncle; he thought that it would be too dangerous so he told me to become an optician or something like that but I just want to become a police lady.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 55)

Similarly her uncle would rather her take up a career which is less dangerous and therefore suggests that she becomes an optician. However, she is adamant that she wants to become a 'police lady'.

This UK student points out that his desire to go into the army was changed by the his grandmother in particular:

Going into the army – my grandma did not want me to go in and she basically - I am very grateful to her for changing my mind about doing it.

(UK. CAT. M. 79)

Again, this was likely to have been a concern for his safety; he is now pleased that he took her advice.

Grandparents can also be a source of general encouragement. For example, this Antiguan student points out:

and my grand parents... They tell me what I put my mind to I can become one day. If I want to become an accountant they're 100 percent behind me with that.

(AG.4th Frm. M. 2)

Other family members also have a role. 'Cornflakes', for example, acknowledges that much of the influence for her to go into teaching has come from her mother and aunts already being teachers:

Well, I can say a good amount of advice. And I really know it stems down from my mother's side because all her sisters have been in the teaching business.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

Asked if she would say that had a great influence on her wanting to become a teacher she replies:

In one sense yes and in another, I only like found out some time back that the other one was a teacher. But it plays some significant role. But it all comes down to me. I love teaching. I think it's very important.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

Similarly, Nemo's aunt and uncle are doctors:

Yes sir. All my friends and my family want me to become a doctor, and so they give me information on what kind of doctors there are and so on and what subjects you will need and so on. And my auntie and my uncle are doctors so they teach me the necessary information.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 14)

They have provided her with information, advice and guidance on what she needs to do to become a doctor:

Like they tell me websites to go on to see any kind of doctor you're interested in. Ahm they tell me the subjects you need. They tell me what I would need to like get a particular scholarship and so on to study for medicine.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 14)

Nemo goes on to reveal that from an early age there has been an assumption that she would become a doctor, primarily by her mother but also supported by her aunt and uncle:

No my family shaped me into that. Because, the tradition was that my uncle and my aunts are doctors and my mother wanted to become a doctor too but that didn't work out for her so, she wants me to become a doctor too. And since I like medicine and so on I just plan to become a doctor.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 14)

This shows a general family expectation as well as, again, an Antiguan mother's aspirations for her daughter where she herself has failed.

Jade, a UK student, was influenced by her cousin, who is now in Australia with a successful career as a midwife:

No she were telling me like about the college and then she just told me that midwife was a good one and then I just thought about it and then I just decided I wanted to be it.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 50)

Other participants refer to family support and advice, although they are not specific about the family members involved. Higgins, a UK student, for example, claims that she was not given any advice about careers at school, so in deciding what she wanted to do she depended on her family for advice and guidance:

I spoke to my family – they helped me a lot and like said whatever I do they'll back me up and like spoke to me about college courses and which would be better. So they helped me out a lot and I just like went on like what I thought and what they said really.

(UK. BUS. F. 69)

Asked what sort of advice her family had given her, she replied:

They just said, ahm well, what do you want to do? I said well I think I want to go to college to do like business. And they helped me looking at prospectuses and things like that and said like what they thought would be good for me and things like that. And then I've just valued their opinion, made my own decision in the end.

(UK. BUS. F. 69)

It is clear that she made her own decisions, but with family discussion, and based on the research they helped her to do as well as advice and support.

Shekira pointed out that her family had encouraged her to aim high:

...well, my whole family thinks that you should go and do something in science and become a dentist or something. But it just depends on what you want, not what they want.

(UK. BUS. F. 76)

When asked why her family had suggested science or dentistry she explained:

Because my family think you get good pay and everything. You get a good career... as dentistry and everything. But at the end of the day it's going to be you who is going to be working towards that goal

(UK. BUS. F. 76)

Like Higgins, Shekira reminds us that, what ever her family suggest, it is she who as to decide, as she will be the one having to work hard to achieve her family's aspirations.

'Tweety', a UK student had wanted to be a hairdresser, which she saw as something that she enjoyed doing, but she was discouraged by her father because of the pay:

I wanted to be an hairdresser and because we're quite a close family I told my mum and dad that I wanted to be an hairdresser. Coz he asked me what I wanted to be and my dad actually said "well, I'll tell you the truth, if you want to do it, you do it, because at the end of the day its your career, but it is really bad pay.

(UK. CAT. F. 82)

She subsequently sought the advice of another family member, a cousin, who reinforced this:

And I asked my cousin who's actually got her own business in...Germany! And she said it is actually quite bad pay.

(UK. CAT. F. 82)

The results have shown that elder siblings may act as role models and sources of information for their younger siblings and may influence the younger ones to either take up or reject a particular subject, college or career by the way in which they present their experiences or perceptions.

However, exerting an influence which results in the younger sibling following their example is more common. A sibling may choose a particular course or career path simply because one or more of his or her siblings has done so. Older siblings, like parents can be an important source of encouragement, at times being very pragmatic with their advice. On the other hand, their influence may help the younger sibling avoid making the mistakes which they had made. These may be viewed as negative influences which may deter other siblings from wanting to go down a similar route.

Older siblings can be a very important source of advice. As Tucker *et al* (1997) have pointed out, young people may prefer to seek advice from someone who is likely to hold similar values, and with whom they have a long, established relationship. Foskett (1996) and Payne (2003) have also mentioned the importance of siblings, although they do not provide the detail that this research has supplied.

Taylor (1992) points out that the advice provided by older siblings is likely to be more precise. Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) also suggest that it will be more current. This is likely to be the case here, especially where specific colleges and courses are being recommended. Tucker *et al* (1997) also suggest that siblings may act as a 'testing ground' where ideas are discussed before parents are approached. Although this seems possible, there was no specific evidence for it in this study.

Some of the examples used have shown that competitive rivalries can exist between siblings, at times encouraging younger ones to succeed where others have not. This could, however, exert undue pressure as one seeks to keep pace with another in terms of academic success or occupational status. Altman (1997) considered this to be a significant finding in her research, that siblings very often appear to be a source of challenge and competition for each other. The competitive element was the one most frequently observed in this study. Although Altman acknowledges that sibling competition can cause 'undue pressure', she considers that it is can also be beneficial, in encouraging a young person to do their best.

As Altman (1997) points out, other family members also influence young people's career choice and decision making. Listening to family members' past experiences can raise interest and even influence young people in following their footsteps. As shown in this research, this may occur individually, or in combination with other family members. One's advice may be used to back up the opinion of another. Grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles may all be involved. Family members may, for one reason or another, dissuade young people from following certain career paths. Occasionally, family pressure can cause young people to choose subjects or career paths against their own wishes.

6.5 Friends and peers

Young people spend a great deal of their daily lives together whether at school, play or just through general socialisation and therefore it is very likely that they will discuss possible career paths. Thus peers will have the ability to influence one another either positively or negatively in terms of their choices and decisions.

In order to provide an overview of whether such discussions were taking place amongst peer groups and to provide an impression of the types of careers which individuals were considering, the young people in the school surveys were asked to indicate the type of career that they thought their friends were planning to go into.

Table 6.2 Type of career planned by friends

		What type of career are your friends thinking of going into			
		Vocational type %	Academic type %	Don't know %	Both Academic & Vocational %
Location of Institution	Antiguan School	13.8	56.1	30.1	0
	UK School	21.0	19.8	37.0	22.2
Total		16.7	41.7	32.8	8.8

Table 7.2 shows that in Antigua, just over half (56.1%) indicated that their friends were thinking of going into academic type careers, while the 13.8% thought that their friends were going into vocational type careers. Thirty percent did not know. In the UK 37% indicated that they did not know, followed by 22.2 % who indicated both academic and vocational type careers, 21% who indicated vocational type careers and 19.8% who indicated academic type careers.

Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) found that over half of the young people in their study had discussed their career choices with friends. This is similar to the findings in Antigua, but fewer UK students appear to have done so. However, it was possibly the nature of the question, asking participants to categorise careers as ‘academic’ or ‘vocational’ that resulted in the higher proportion of ‘don’t knows’, as it has become increasingly clear as this research has progressed that young people do not use, or think in, these terms.

It is generally agreed that young people do not want to appear to be different from their peers and therefore they may copy what their friends do. They want to be a part of their crowd; they want to be socially accepted and fit in amongst their peers and so will succumb to the influences of others. Young people at times will make great sacrifices to fit in with their friends. This can even mean going against values and attitudes with which they have been brought up and in which they themselves believe. They adopt the attitudes and behaviours of others in order to fit in. Peer pressure is often seen as negative and stressful for the young.

It is evident from the interview data that individuals were well aware of the existence of peer pressure and the effect it could have. Nemo, for example, raises the issue of the effects young people may be able to exert on one another when she talks of peer

pressure. She defines peer pressure as a negative pressure exerted by one individual on another as a means of getting the other person ‘down to their level’:

Well people that see you doing well, like want to bring you down so they try to tempt you to do all kind of – like smoking and so on but just don’t give in to them.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 14)

Kola agrees, by saying that:

Friends, you know some friends, don’t want to see you come out good in life, they want to pull you down with them, so they will say all kinds of things just to change your mind.

(AG.5th Frm. F 16)

One example of peer pressure is that of individuals taking a particular path simply because everyone else is doing it. Marge, who is a mature UK college student notes that, when she took A levels after leaving school, it was because it was seen as the thing to do and everyone else was doing so. She points out that the young impressionable school leaver can be influenced by what is seen as the thing to do at the time:

Well, the first time it was just ... I don’t know. Coz everybody else did. When I first left school I went and did my A levels, because it was the thing to do. Then I decided more on what I wanted to do, which was ... I went into child care. I did an advanced child care course, Ahm, when I was in my twenties and I enjoyed that. But that was through choice...

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

She suggests that, only when she had reached her twenties did she exert her own choice, and take a vocational course rather than the A levels that she took ‘because everyone else did’. However, the question begs to be asked as to whether this was just peer pressure, or whether it was also the expectation brought about by an education system geared to students staying on at school and taking A levels.

Lisa, a UK business studies student provides an interesting insight into the long-term effects of peer pressure. She notes that many of her friends are seeking ‘high paid jobs’ and that this is where the pressure lies:

Ahm, everyone’s just going into doing high paid jobs and it’s a bit like peer pressure but not, you just want to be the same as them and get a high paid job. You don’t want to go to a reunion ten years later and everyone’s there with the flash cars and you say, I work in a fish and chips shop [laughs].

(UK. BUS. F. 73)

She clearly feels that career choice often hinges on peer pressure as individuals do not want to be seen to be outdone by their peers, even in later life.

Peer pressure is usually considered to be negative. For example, a number of Antiguan students mentioned that their friends thought that going to college was a waste of time.

For instance Michael notes:

Some people thought it was a waste of time actually because the rumour of [named institution] is that it's a waste of time. 'Cause sometimes you really need the subjects and people just go up there to have fun and lime about and stuff like that.

(AG. ENG. M. 24)

Although Michael was hearing these things from his peers, he continued to go his own way and go to college, resisting the peer pressure.

Missie, an Antiguan Business student notes that some of her friends have dropped out of college. Asked why they dropped out she replied:

Ahm, they say College was a waste of time.

(AG. BUS. F. 37)

Things are no different in the UK. Kay, a UK business student, noted that most of her friends were already in jobs working in shops and supermarkets and that she too has had negative comments about college. She has adopted their attitude, saying:

Yeah, they say it's a waste of time. Why not just go and get a job and earn some money?

(UK. BUS. F. 58)

Such perceptions, whether warranted or not, can lend themselves to negative influences, as some young people may be led to believe that going to college is in fact a waste of time. This is likely to influence young people when they have to make the decision whether to postpone earning money while they attend college, where they will need to spend long hours and work hard. Ambitious students, willing to make the sacrifice and put in the time and effort are less likely to succumb to peer pressure. Those students who are not thinking strategically about their future but are just concerned about being able to get a job and earn some money may indeed perceive college as a waste of time.

On the whole, participants were very aware that peer pressure could potentially deflect them from achieving their goals:

Friends, peer pressure can hamper me from getting the job I want to ... They can have an influence on leading me astray but I think I have ahm, overcome them.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 13)

In the quotation above, Jay is clearly aware of this; however, as he goes on to point out, for young people who are not as strong willed and can be easily led, the influence of peers can also affect other areas of their lives and lead to serious consequences:

By influencing you in things that not good! Such as drugs, alcohol, ah ...

(AG. ENG. M. 23)

If the effects are not as grave as this, friends can still be a distraction from studying, as 'Skill' points out:

... these friends, they weren't like bad or anything but we just used to waste time, sit down talk, make jokes and so. And I wasn't really having enough time set aside to do my school work so I used to fall back behind...

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

Skill goes on to explain how this might happen:

Whereas I might be thinking about I have a test the next day ...but they would be like saying 'let's go do this and let's go do that' ... That's why I couldn't stay round them, cause I know I won't remember that I have work to finish up.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

There were a number of such examples, in both Antigua and the UK, where young people revealed how they overcame or ignored peer pressure. Liz, a UK year 11 school student for example, points out that with 'maturity' one can learn to do this:

I think they maybe did at GCSE. I think that they maybe had some slight influence there but I've grown up a lot over the GCSE years and I just think now if I don't do something I enjoy now then I'll regret it later.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 39)

Similarly, Kay's response to those who tried to encourage her to give up college and start work has been:

I just say well I want to get some A levels so then I can go and get a better job.

(UK. BUS. F. 58)

Many of 'Champ's' friends had left school to take up apprenticeships, and were encouraging him to do the same:

It's like – Coz, many people - when I was at[name of school] many people there started dropping out and going into apprenticeship – and - I go just like – whatever suits them – coz people had said to me do apprenticeships.

(UK. BUS. M. 62)

His response to his friends was a firm as Kay's:

I go 'apprenticeship suits you but not me'. So like, I didn't want to go into apprenticeship.

(UK. BUS. M. 62)

While Jimmy's friends mock his aspiration to become a fire fighter, he is also able to overcome this:

I mean they all laugh at me because I want to be a fire fighter but I'm not really bothered, cause if that's what I want to do then I'll go for it.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 54)

When asked if it made a difference to him, what other people think, he replied:

No, I just keep in my mind what I need to do. I don't listen to them, cause if you go listening to other people then it just won't be good really because if you're listening to what other people say and following other people all your life you're not gonna ever make your own decisions.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 54)

To the majority of the young people in this study, peer pressure appears to be avoidable, especially if they have their minds set on a particular career.

However, not all peer interaction brings about negative effects. For example, Jay points out that friends can be a source of information. His plans after college are to further his studies in electronics and it was one of his friends who suggested going to a college in Trinidad:

My friend was telling me about this college in – is it Trinidad? – I think. which do the same thing that I'm dealing with – electronics. So I can further my studies...I looked into it to further my studies on electronics.

(AG. ENG. M. 23)

For Scott, in the UK, his choice of college was influenced by friends who had been there before him:

A few of my friends have been- been to that college and they enjoyed it themselves, they like it. That's how I knew...

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 57)

Michael was introduced to computers through school and further influenced through friends having computers at home, who encouraged him to get his own, which he built himself:

A couple[off] friends had a computer and then I had a computer for a while and then I bought my first computer that I put together myself and – just experimenting with computers.

(AG. ENG. M. 24)

Finding that he was good at this and it is something he enjoys, he now wants to continue with a career in this field.

Sue points out that friends can also be a source of support:

Well here, those that are in my class, they say that accounts is hard and I say well I'm still going on with it. Oh, you're good. Accounts hard you're still going on with it? So they really push me to do accounts... and I want to be an accountant and I just want to be an accountant.

(AG. BUS. F. 29)

Although her friends have found studying accounts hard themselves, they realise that she is good at it, and they are actually pushing her to continue. They have adopted the attitude that since she is doing well she should go ahead and pursue accounts as a career. This is a good source of encouragement for her.

There are powerful stories of mutual peer support, that enabled both friends to succeed.

The following, from a UK business studies student, exemplifies this:

Because me and Andrew, we're best mates and we were like talking about how... coz he were working at a butcher's or something at the time and we were talking about... how we're not going to do well and we need to sort our lives out.

(UK. BUS. M. 75)

As he goes on to say, they made a mutual decision that allowed them to support each other through university and enabled them both to succeed:

And then we made like a mutual decision for us both to come and then go to Uni together as well so that we don't have to go on our own or anything. Which has helped a lot; having like the support of someone else – knowing that they're going through like doing the same work, and they've got to do it, they've got to meet deadlines as well. And it's been

helpful, like sharing each other's views on course work or something. Like, if I get stuck on something, I'd be like, oh how do I get round this? And then he'll put in sort of like some information from what's he's done and say I've done this and we'll sort of like share with each other to help each other through getting all of our work done. So, that's good.

(UK. BUS. M. 75)

Finally, as with siblings, competition between peers can also act as a stimulus to succeed. By his own admission, that he had 'played around in primary school' Francis notes that it was seeing his friends getting on the school honour roll that influenced him to work harder and improve his grades. As he said:

Well, my friends. I saw them getting honour roll ...so I wanted it as well.

(AG.4th Frm. M. 12)

Taz, another UK student, showed how the influence of his best friend, who he considered to not be 'as bright' as himself, had nevertheless succeeded in catering, and subsequently won a competition, for three years in a row. This has spurred Taz on to succeed in the same field, and he is now aiming to win the next competition:

Yeah, my best friend ...he also worked at the pub. We used to have a bit of a banter at the beginning, but like he's... he's like my big brother really and he like I said he did this course and he was in my situation where he didn't...he's probably not even as clever as me in general and he didn't do much. But he came here and he won the competition at the end of the year three years in a row, which is quite a mean feat ...which I'm going for this time as well. But there were nowt to say I can't do this it was something new and different.

(UK. CAT. M. 80)

The fact that, according to Taz, both of them had not done well at school, and that his best friend was now succeeding as a chef was a strong influence, for him to try 'something new and different'. Seeing his friend achieve made Taz realise that, as he said, there was nothing to say that he couldn't do it either.

In summary, it is apparent from this study that peer influence is an important factor in career decision making. However, what is significant is that young people are very aware of the concept of peer pressure, and in these examples, provided succinct definitions of it. Perhaps as a result of this understanding, there were very few examples of peer pressure working in a negative way. Those who experienced it (and there were many) showed that they overcame it by ignoring what was said, or saying 'it suits you, not me', and having the determination to leave their friends when they

had studying to do. For as, one participant pointed out, '*following other people all your life you're not gonna ever make your own decisions*'.

These findings accord with the work of Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) who found that, at school, students did not pick subjects just because their friends were taking them, and Payne (2003), who suggested that young people do not choose a career path just because their friends have done so. Payne (2003) did suggest, though, that young people may be influenced to stay on in education because their friends are doing so, and there is some evidence for this in this study.

Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) also explored the concept of peer pressure, saying that teachers in their research claimed they had to work hard to reduce it. They concluded that peer pressure could be positive or negative. In this study, where peer influence did operate, it was generally in a positive way. Sources of information on courses and colleges, introduction to a new hobby and a subsequent career were some of the examples. Practical support, persuading a young girl that she was intelligent enough to continue on a college course, despite the fact that she was finding it hard going, and a moving story of peer support between two young men, who realising that they were 'not going to do well' unless they worked and obtained some qualifications, supported one another through college and university, was much in evidence. This to some extent contradicts Blenkinsop *et al's* (2006) findings, that few young people 'located their friends at the circle of their influence'. Friends certainly had a significant, if not by any means the only, influence in this study.

Finally, as with siblings, there could be a competitive element between peers, which encouraged achievement.

6.6 Schools and teachers

In Chapter 3 the political rhetoric of the importance of education to the economy was noted. It stressed that individuals need to acquire as much education and training as possible if a country's economy is to prosper. Comments from participants in this study suggest that they expect their schooling to have a marked influence on them, in preparing them for the world of work. This influence is likely to take many forms.

Young people spend a great deal of their lives in school, coming into contact with a range of different teachers and various subjects which they may like or dislike. The possibility of being influenced by teachers, in being given formal or informal advice, or the transmission of attitudes and values is high. Even the way a subject is taught may influence a young person with regard to whether they wish to study it further. As discussed in the last section, there will also be influences from the peer group.

Some students see school specifically as a place for preparation for the future, as Dimitry, an Antiguan student, explains:

Well, school to me is really like a training ground; you come here at sometimes 8 o'clock in the morning, sometimes earlier, go through your classes, go home, study you know, yeah that sort of stuff.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 8)

Here Dimitry is presumably including broad personal skills, such as time keeping and self-discipline, as well as academic qualifications, in his consideration of the effect of schooling. Roo also points this out:

... school is not just a place for learning it's a place for ahm, preparing you for the outside world.

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

And Kola expands on this further, by highlighting some of the social aspects of schooling as well as the more practical aspects of preparing for the world of work:

'Cause I meet new people, they teach us how to interact with other people, and it prepares us for the outside world. They teach etiquette, how to prepare ourselves to go on interviews, and all those stuff.

(AG.5th Frm. F 16)

These young people are clearly expecting that their schooling will enable them to gain the required knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to get them into the workplace.

Much of the advice young people in schools receive from teachers is of the classic 'you must work hard and study to gain qualifications if you want to get anywhere in life'. There is a sense of instilling the need to do well academically in order to get a job. Teachers tend to stress that if their students work hard they will achieve what they want, as Jade, a UK Year 10 student, explains:

Oh they just say like oh, if you don't listen to me now you won't be able to get a good job and stuff like that. I mean my dad always use to say if you don't listen in class you will end up in- working in ahm working in McDonalds for the rest of your life.

(UK. Yr.10. F. 50)

Jade's father has repeated the same advice, with a terrible threat! Teachers in college continue with the same theme, Shekira, a UK business studies student pointed out:

They told us if you get good grades in science you'll get into this career, if you get good grades in English or Maths you'll get into these kind of careers. So, they told us to put our heads down and work our way towards what we wanted to do and then get that career in the end.

(UK. BUS. F. 76)

In Antigua the situation was the same, with responses reflecting that students were also being encouraged to achieve their qualifications in order to obtain employment.

Shorty, a 4th form student reported:

The teachers mostly say – they say if you don't have the qualification you don't get the job. That's what they say.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 11)

The question is whether such advice was seen as pushing students to achieve, or whether it was offered more neutrally. Not all UK students felt that they were being pushed, rather that they were being provided with information. Asked if teachers had discussed careers with them, Jimmy replied:

No, not really just- maybe PHSE teachers they are just saying well you need certain things to get certain jobs. ...like good grades and that you need to go smart and look like you are reliable.

(UK. Yr.11. M. 54)

At times, young people have gained the sense that teachers are promoting academic routes – the importance of gaining high GCSE passes, staying on at school to do A levels and then going to university - as the only course to a successful career. As Jane, a UK Year 11 student indicates:

...it seems like the way they present it to us, its more like if you don't go to sixth form and get A' levels then you're not going to have a good job...

(UK. Yr.11. F. 38)

She questions this advice, pointing out that people, self-employed people for example, are able to make money without going to university:

which is just not right because people can go off and erm, especially self employed people erm they can go off and they can make a lot of money, they don't have to have A' levels or anything like that to do, you don't have to have good grades but they do seem to pump that into you though, you need to go to sixth form and university and things.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 38)

Jane considers that there is no doubt, young people are being encouraged to stay on and do A levels, whether this is the best choice for them or not:

I think they do... they encourage everyone to stay on at sixth form, which I don't think they need to because I don't think that everyone needs to stay on at sixth form because some people do a lot better going out and getting a job...

(UK. Yr.11. F. 38)

Te-Marie, an Antiguan fourth form student, similarly points out that she wanted to go to commercial college, but was being encouraged by teachers to take A levels instead:

I wanted to go to Commercial but people telling me that I should go to A Levels, but I think... they just think I am a A levels person.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 4)

It is debatable whether or not this type of advice can ever be said to be impartial as teachers, along with having their own personal biases, can be seen to have a vested interest in their students going on to the sixth form, as this will boost the school's image and league table standing.

The extent to which young people are informed about different jobs and the training needed for them, whether it is necessary for them to stay on at school or whether they would be better suited to taking a vocational course at college is another concern.

When asked how much they had been told about vocational careers at school, Jane continued:

Not much really, no - we're encouraged quite a lot to go into sixth form and, erm, academic jobs and get higher skills and things, higher education. Not told a lot about vocational...

(UK. Yr.11. F. 38)

Casy, an Antiguan student, points out that there is a relatively limited choice of vocational subject options in school as compared to academic subject options:

I mean, in school you don't have much choices for like vocational stuff, it's mostly academic. You hardly ever hear any body talking about it, it's mostly doctor, lawyer, chemistry, physics, biology, those kinds of things. When it comes to woodwork and metalwork, it's that same perception – that's like that's a low class thing, like. That's what most people think.
(AG.5th Frm. F. 18)

Casy detects a negative bias towards the vocational options. However, this is not always the case; Bob, for example, notes that his teacher has provided him with information relating to vocational careers:

Yeah, my electrical teacher always tell me about the different jobs ... welding electrical field.
(AG. ENG. M. 22)

Here again the question is whether or not this was impartial advice or was it vocationally biased. As a vocational teacher of electrical engineering, was he simply trying to encourage Bob into a vocational career?

This raises the question about how much advice teachers can give about careers outside of their specialism, and how accurate it will be? How much do they know about different careers that they have had no real experience of? When asked about this Michael replied:

Well I don't think most of them have been in it but at least they are supposed to know more than us at that age.
(AG. ENG. M. 24)

It does appear, that with a few exceptions, most of the young people in this study were being encouraged by their teachers to remain in academic study, and not providing much information, if any, about vocational courses or careers.

If this is the case, what can be said about the quality of the advice given by a specialist subject (i.e. non-careers) teacher? There is a suggestion that they may encourage students to follow routes of subjects that they themselves have taken. Jane explains how this happened to her:

Well I've always been interested in astronomy... but geo-physics kind of popped into my head when I was wondering round talking to the geology teachers and things, so er... whenever I said erm I was doing physics and geology they all kind of leapt on, oh you going to do geo-physics kind of thing...
(UK. Yr.11. F. 38)

This may also occur with vocational subjects. For example, Bob, an Antiguan engineering student who has been quoted above, had a good rapport with his electrical engineering teacher in school and this has seemingly reinforced a love for the subject:

Well, I got a 'I' in electrical and my previous electrical teacher wanted me to pursue electrical technology and get a scholarship in engineering. Well, he told me that I should go and further my education, because my mind hasn't – although I know my technical work and so on – my mind wasn't actually there at the moment of going and pursuing – only when I am being encouraged I will do - if it is a positive – I will do it. Sometimes I don't really do it.

(AG. ENG. M. 22)

The teacher has therefore been able to encourage Bob to go to college and further pursue the subject at a higher level, which as he explains, was unlikely to happen unless he was encouraged to do so.

The same happened to Te-Marie, who, as was shown above, planned to go to a Commercial college, but was persuaded by her teachers to study A levels. Her teachers went on to suggest careers that she could follow once she had completed her A Levels:

Because they think that I should go into Law ... And they want me – they think that I should be a lawyer and stuff like that, and A' levels gives that kind of opportunity I guess. They don't really see me as a business person but I love business. Cause I talk a lot, they say that, yes...

(AG.4th Frm. F. 4)

However, despite this advice, and being persuaded by her teachers that she could succeed in this field, Te-Marie is still hankering after a career in business.

Other Antiguan students have found that teachers have had a more open approach. As Shenelle, a fourth form student explains, the nature of advice from teachers was to think about what you would like to do as a career in the future and then choose the subjects needed to pursue that career:

They mainly tell you to choose what subject according to what you want to be. Yeah, but if you want to do it you must be able to pass them. 'Cause I think they say that if you can't manage a subject they won't allow you to do it.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 5)

They remind students that the subjects they choose must be ones that they good at; and in fact, suggest that they will not allow students to chose subjects as options in which they are unlikely to succeed.

There are also examples from Antigua where teachers have advised less able students of the careers they might follow. An Antiguan fifth former presents his views on this:

I've heard teachers say those things, and personally I don't think that they should. Because as a teacher you have the – or you're supposed to help - the student with the weaker areas. So I don't think that they should go and say like 'Oh you not good in any subject, you need to find a job cleaning the streets'.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

Another Antiguan student reports the same:

Yeah, I've heard that. I've learnt it here and at primary school too... the teachers does tell the older students well it seems like you don't want to be here in school or anything so it's best you go and learn a trade.

(AG.5th Frm. F 16)

The first student goes on to say how much influence this could have, and how this could affect a young person's confidence in their abilities:

Because to me it plays on the students' minds and in the back of the student's mind they'd say like oh, that is what they told me, that is what I have to become because that. So they kind of have an influence – what they say has a great influence on what we become later in life.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 6)

It is not clear whether the teachers in these examples are giving specific careers advice (however damning), or whether they are using what they say as a device to encourage their pupils to work harder.

As discussed in Sub-section 5.2.4, there are also limitations in the choice of subject that young people can make, due to the Antiguan school system. Students who have been held back for a year or two due to their ability and have thus attended post-primary school found that they were not allowed to do certain academic subjects, despite there being no official policy on this. Thus they were steered towards vocational subjects. Casy explains that these students are offered vocational type subjects and are not allowed to pursue subjects such as the foreign languages, biology, chemistry, or physics:

...because the subjects that they offer them that they get to choose from is not the same subjects we get to choose from. They don't allow them to do foreign languages, they don't allow them to do the chemistry and physics and stuff like that. They usually have to do craft and home economics and those kinds of things.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 18)

As Casy points out, there is often a stigma attached to this:

Because people see them as slow in a sense or to some extent some people would say that they're dunce like. But it's just ...they're not into the academics. Most of the times they're into the other stuff like the building tech and stuff like that. That's what they usually end up doing.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 18)

This suggests an academic/vocational bias not only by the teachers, but by the system, reminiscent of the UK grammar and secondary modern school system.

In just one quotation was there a suggestion that there was a gender bias. In Antigua, Te-Marie notes that teachers were more likely to encourage the boys to do woodwork, however they never encourage them to do home economics:

They encourage the boys mostly to do woodwork. They don't encourage the boys to do home ec. and stuff like that. I think it's kind of a diverse thing. Girls suppose to cook in the house, boys suppose to go out and do the hard work but I don't see there's no form of equality.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 4)

This may also be viewed culturally, in that it may be seen as more appropriate for boys to do wood work and metal work while the girls do home economics. Although times are changing in Antigua and some cultural biases are disappearing, there is sometimes a tendency for some to remain, especially in older individuals.

Students can also see teachers as role models and wish to emulate them. This may be in the form of wanting to follow them into their particular specialism, or it may be about wanting to become a teacher *per se*, as in the case of Liz, who, when thinking about her future career:

I wondered about a teacher and I'd started of sort of thinking junior school teacher, but now as I'm progressing through the school I'm thinking, oh, it might be quite good to be involved within a secondary school, but then I don't know what I would actually teach and then there's also erm a teacher that ... she's not a teacher but she does sports but she travels around different schools getting involved in what the school does and sort of bringing the community together within sport and I think that sounds interesting.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 39)

Liz has also observed a peripatetic sports teacher, and also considers that this might be a suitable career for her. However, occasionally a teacher can have the opposite effect, as described by Rand, who was discouraged from studying physics under a new teacher:

Well from 1st to 3rd everything was going good. Passed all my subjects ... in 3rd form when I just filled out the ahm, the stuff that you have to choose your options I choose physics. I know that I was going to challenge myself because the impression that I'm getting is that physics is going to be hard, but I was the one that got 100s and so on in 3rd form ... then when I reached 4th a teacher – a new teacher came and then my grades just dropped by far; hardly any body passed in 4th form right now. So that's causing a decline in what I'm doing right now.

(AG.4th Frm. M.1)

Alternatively, Michael's statement also shows how particular teachers can make a real difference in guiding students:

Yeah we had a lot of – we had a couple teachers that were just real influential and they would guide you and basically try their best.

(AG. ENG. M. 24)

Also in Antigua, 'Skill' pointed out that he was given advice, but on the understanding that only each individual could ultimately make the decision as to what they wanted to do:

Well the advice he gave us was it can't be something that is forced on you, it has to be something that you came to this decision on your own and you believe that you could see yourself over the years still pursuing this job. So you have to be fully certain that this is what you want to do and then you do it.

(AG. BUS. M. 35)

One female UK student, however, had found all the school careers advice too much:

Yea, you've got forms from every tutorial. What college do you want to go to? What are you going to do after high school? Go and see the career adviser. And it's like every time you just thought God I'll go to a college, leave me alone and stop it. So, I told her I was going to go to college... I got a pamphlet for [name] Tech..

(UK. BUS. F. 73)

To summarise, the results have shown that the majority of young people see their schooling as preparing them for the world of work. They expect that school will provide them with the knowledge, skill and attitudes required to get a job. These findings concur with Cullingford (2004) who points out that, from an early age, pupils assume that they attend school in order to be prepared for the world of work. Young people also consider the development of various social skills, such as working with others and timekeeping, to be of value.

As suggested by Methany *et al* (2008) the length of time spent in school, and the fact that pupils come into contact with a range of different teachers and various subjects, means that there is a strong possibility that young people's career choices will be influenced by their schooling. This can occur through the formal and informal advice provided by teachers or by the transmission of attitudes and values on an individual or 'whole school' basis. Foskett *et al* (2008) agree that the culture and ethos of the school will shape choices and preferences. Ryrie (1981) and Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) have pointed out that some of this advice may be unintentional or 'subliminal', communicated through the attitudes and values that the teacher conveys.

It is evident from participants' responses that teachers constantly stress that if they work hard and gain qualifications, they will be better placed to obtain a well paid job. This outlook is often reinforced by similar comments made by their parents, as discussed previously. Thus, young people are led to believe that academic achievement is the key to success in life. It was found that most students were encouraged by their teachers to remain in academic study, even when their inclination was to go into a vocational route. This was frequently the case, even when they would perhaps have been more suited to a vocational career. This happened in this study despite Bathmaker's (2005) suggestion that young people who are perceived as not academically able are usually seen as being suitable for vocationally oriented subjects. In this study, many young people reported that they were provided with relatively little information about 'vocational' type careers, while being given lots of information on

‘academic’ type careers. Taylor, 1992, Hemsley- Brown (1999) and Foskett and Hemsley Brown (2001) have all noted an imbalance in the careers information provided to students in terms of the relative amount of information provided on academic and vocational careers.

Thus, there is a question as to whether the type of advice given by teachers to students can be viewed as being impartial, as teachers can be considered to have vested interests in seeing their schools do well in league tables and may thus direct students into subjects in which they will succeed, rather than those which will be a firm foundation for their careers. Teachers may encourage pupils to stay on into the school sixth form as a way of increasing student numbers, rather than having them leave to take a college vocational course (Foskett and Hemsley Brown, 2001). Teachers may also have their own personal biases. There was an issue as to the amount and accuracy of advice which teachers are able to provide students about different careers, particularly if they have been in teaching all their working lives (Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 1999; Blenkinsop *et al*, 2006). Taylor (1992) and Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1999) both point out that teachers are more familiar with the academic A level and degree routes that they themselves have followed.

While teachers in the UK sometimes appear reluctant to give career advice to their students, in Antigua students are more likely to be encouraged, when making their subject choices, to select subjects related to the career which they would like to go into. However, it was noted that, in Antigua, there was still a tendency to provide guidance along traditional and outdated gender lines. Boys were more likely to be encouraged to do woodwork and metalwork while girls were more likely to be directed towards home economics.

Despite the above, there were also a number of examples of inspirational subject teaching or role modelling by teachers that encouraged students to follow a particular subject or career. It is evident that teachers can make a real difference in guiding a young person towards the most appropriate career choices for them. In their research, Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) and Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2006) have come to similar conclusions.

6.7 Careers Advisers

Career advisers are charged with the role of providing individuals with impartial information, advice and guidance so that they can make appropriate career decisions. One would therefore expect careers advisers to have great importance given the specific role which they perform. However, as Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2008) have pointed out, careers guidance can be very variable, and as well as varying from school to school it has also varied over the years. Even recently in the UK, there have been major changes to the way in which careers advice is delivered in schools and colleges. The use of the term careers adviser will in this section refer to school based careers advisers, usually specialist careers teachers, except where otherwise stated.

In the UK many students reported getting what appeared to be good, sound, practical careers advice. For example Bart, a male UK business student, in pointing out the helpfulness of his careers adviser reported:

She used to ask us what college you want to go to. What you want to do? What's suitable and stuff, you know she would check what you're good at and stuff. She like helped you choose the right things.

(UK. BUS. M. 78)

Suggestions for individuals to have fall-back options, alternative routes and back-up plans continually cropped up during interviews with the young people. In Jimmy's case the advice was to have a back-up plan just in case his first option did not come to fruition:

Yeah I've been once and she were just saying that in case I don't get fire fighter then I'll just have to have like a back-up plan and something else - another job.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 54)

Hannah mentioned that her careers adviser suggested that she speak to others about her interest in directing and she also suggested, as was the case with Jimmy, that she should have a back-up plan:

Ahm she did - she mentioned seeing other people as well and... Ahm she was the one that - well she is the one that...she sort of insisted that I had a fall-back plan.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 56)

Scott pointed out that, in his case, the careers adviser was able to suggest an alternative route which suited his interests and also did not involve having to do A levels:

Yes, I've been a few times – cause I was saying about wanting to be an architect and she says well what about doing this instead, for my own help really, for my own sake. Instead of getting myself into a muddle by doing the architect course because you need a lot of A levels which I didn't get and just - another thing that would be good for you is the graphic course and she helped me and she gave me those leaflets and booklets and that helped me.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 57)

There were also instances where examples of good vocational-type advice were given to the young people, as is demonstrated by Mark's comments:

Yeah, like we talked about different things and what qualifications we needed and what we'd need to do in order to get the job and what you'd do in the job. Like say if you were like a farm helper or something you'd have to like go and help out with the animals or feed them and so on.

(UK. BUS. M. 60)

Some of what could be said to be very pragmatic advice about the pitfalls of a particular job is demonstrated by Stephen's comments:

Ahm- we have had a lot of advice on going to college and university. Ahm I've had a lot of advice in saying if I wanted a job what would be the bad things I said I'd like to do like ahm - like carpet layer and they said but you'd get bad knees, you can get some bad knees off that. Well then - so they give me ideas like that, they give me things to think about.

(UK. Yr. 10. M. 48)

In several cases it appeared as though the students had overambitious aspirations which the careers advisers, having been based in the schools and having knowledge of the young people as well as access to their school records and their capabilities, were able to temper by providing them with realistic careers advice which brought the students back down to earth. For example, Scott pointed out that although he wanted to be an architect, the careers adviser was able to suggest the alternative route of graphic design. As he goes on to point out this was some very pragmatic advice:

She says well you can - obviously she were helping me to try and do that as well and she gave me leaflets about the graphic course and I went home and I thought well let's just do a graphic course let's just do that instead of doing the A levels and doing something that I don't want which I'd have to take in maths again and take your English again - it's not me, so I thought well let's just do the graphic course. So in a way she helped me quite a lot by giving me advice about the graphic course as well.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 57)

Helen similarly pointed out that her careers adviser was also able to provide her with a pragmatic approach on how to go about choosing a media course:

Ahm, she did name other courses but she said do the media course because that gives you like an overview so you are not just merely saying right I want to be a director so I am gonna take that thing. Cause if I don't make it as a director... I have an overview and get some other skills for other types of media then I'd be able to like - if I don't make it as a director I could make it as something else.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 53)

These young people for the most part have been brought up in a culture where it is considered that everyone is going to be a success and everyone will start on a high salary. Thus, on the whole, young people now have high expectations, and are reluctant to start at the bottom and work their way up. It has already been pointed out in sub-section 6.3.1 that many parents tend to have high aspirations for their children and may even try to push them into areas that are not right for them (either because they are not interested in the area or do not have the capability for the particular area). The possibility therefore exists that the careers advisers may then act as a sort of 'leveller', able to offer more pragmatic, realistic advice to help them make their choices. This would be particularly the case if the adviser was school based and knew the young person's background; however, with larger schools even the school based advisers may not know the background of the students who come to see them.

However, not everyone had such positive experiences; some felt the careers advice was poor or indifferent. Buggs, a UK Business student, complained that his careers guidance was limited and that the information in the careers library was sparse:

You see, I don't think we got a right lot of advice about jobs. We didn't really get any. We had a careers library. I know coz I helped out there a few times but they weren't very good. The information on it didn't seem ahm very in depth. You see it said basically what each job does. You know, like a fireman you'd do this or whatever. It didn't say things like pay, hours, things like that, useful information that you'd find out.

(UK. BUS. M. 74)

The careers library did not contain the practical advice that Buggs wanted. Also, careers time can be marginalised by other priorities; Hanah had noted that although she had received good advice from the careers adviser, she complained that the time allocated for careers education in PHSE was spent instead catching up on course work:

Well apart from the career adviser we have PHSE lessons and citizenship lessons where ahm we are just given the opportunity to - well, for the moment now it's a free lesson where we catch up on course work but before we learnt... I remember this quite vividly - is where we would talk about which skills would be needed for which kind of skills ahm which skills would be needed for which kind of jobs even.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 56)

For many of the young people, the visits to the careers adviser tended to focus on which college the individual wanted to go to and if they were going to do A levels. So much so that 'Super', a male UK IT student, felt that the careers adviser at the school which he had attended was only interested in those who wanted to do A levels:

I don't know- it's just- cause she used to- she used to do like little group sessions with people who wanted to go to uni or like people who wanted to go to sixth form – not like those who just wanted go to basic college.

(UK. IT. M. 66)

Asked whether the career adviser didn't in turn hold any group sessions with people who didn't want to go to sixth form he replied:

She weren't bothered really about whether - like the lads what wants-like me and my mate - what just wanted to go into mechanicing. Yea-like the lawyers - who wanted to be lawyers or nurses and things like that - she wanted to push the ones forward who were gonna - who were aiming higher for themselves...

(UK. IT. M. 66)

'Super' subsequently sought advice from the Connexions careers office in town. One may question whether the lack of advice (or indeed, interest) in vocational routes was due to the school attempting to promote attendance in the sixth form. Was there no interest on promoting vocational careers to those who were interested or for whom they were suited?

The central Connexions service appeared to be used by students as an employment agency or 'job shop' where they went to find out about jobs on offer. Fred, a male UK business student, mentioned that he too went to the Connexions service, but was not given any careers advice, just some job vacancies and courses:

I didn't really get that much advice. I just told them that I was into business studies and stuff and they looked... they showed me some job vacancies that was about and some, like courses from different places in town.

(UK. BUS. M. 71)

Although there is a statutory requirement for careers education and guidance in the UK, it appears that it is not providing students with a wide overview of the different jobs or careers available to them. There were many examples where the young people were given advice only on specific jobs or careers that they put forward, rather than being presented with a range of different options. For example, when asked about the advice given to him on the different jobs and careers available, Stephen replied:

*She asked me what I'd want to do and then gave me a list of options.
They ask us what we're interested in and what we would like to do as a job.*

(UK. Yr. 10. M. 48)

As Helen revealed, when she went for careers advice, she was asked what she was planning to do:

The first time I went she asked what I wanted to do, what course I wanted to go to, what college I wanted to go to, ahm do you think you're gonna get the grades to go to that college to do the course? ...that's what she really talks to you about.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 53)

Likewise, Douglas provides another example which highlights the issue of only being given information which is asked for:

*When I was in school – in the final years we got given like information.
If we wanted to find information out about a certain type of job they gave us the information that we asked for.*

(UK. IT. M. 68)

Similarly, when asked to explain how she obtained her careers advice Raji said:

I just go up to her (careers adviser) and then I asked. She showed me around - the leaflets, what kind of jobs and other things there are and I asked for a leaflet of West Yorkshire Police Station and she gave it me.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 55)

And Kay, a female UK business student also highlights this issue of only being told about what you have suggested to the careers adviser:

We used to have careers meetings at school. They just tell you about – just tell them what you want to do and they just tell you about that type of business or that type of career. Like they tell you what like degrees you need and what skills and stuff.

(UK. BUS. F. 58)

While it is undoubtedly useful to receive further information about your chosen career path and how to pursue it, the opportunity to inform young people about other career

options is being missed. In addition, there are many young people who have no real idea about what they want to do.

There were other instances where young people felt that they were being steered towards academic options, whether it was suitable for them or not. Jason, a male UK IT student, felt this:

Like university and - coz they were pushing for like – to come to colleges and stuff like that...

(UK. IT. M. 65)

Likewise, from the careers advice received, Alex also felt that he was being encouraged to stay on in education and go to college or sixth form:

Been to career adviser and just telling us what to do. Ahm, like advising us what to do next in life; like, to go to college, sixth form, whatever.

(UK. IT. M. 63)

Whatever was said to Alex it is obvious that he has come away with the perception that he is being encouraged to pursue further qualifications by staying on in education. This may be a reflection of the UK government's policy of increasing the number of young people who stay on in education and training. However as Marge pointed out:

Not everybody wants to go to college, a lot of people want to go straight out into the workplace. And they're only two years at college and then they're going to be working.

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

Some students on the other hand, felt that they had no help from a careers adviser at all. Asked if he had seen the careers person at school, 'Flash', a UK Year 10 student, replied:

I know who she is, we had one lesson with her but it weren't anything special ... I think it was near to when we were choosing our options (I think it was) and, ahm, we went round in the library and there is a section with all sorts of careers stuff and it was just more or less pick what you want and stuff like that... There weren't anything that I had learnt from or think-make me think about anything.

(UK. Yr. 10. M. 51)

Flash had clearly not seen the relevance of his 'one lesson' with her, nor did he find that being shown information in the library worked for him, in terms of identifying a suitable career.

At times it appeared that the majority of careers advice was provided by simply handing out leaflets or booklets to the students. Raji points out that this happened to her:

Ahm well she gave me like leaflets to show me like what kinds of jobs there are in the police station and what kind of things you can do...
(UK. Yr. 11. M. 55)

This handing out of literature was made worse, in a couple of instances by a bureaucratic system which a young person may well find offputting. For example when asked about the sort of advice she had received from the careers adviser, a female UK year 10 student, replied:

She sent me some leaflets and some booklets on where you can get jobs. You just go to the teacher, she hands you a form, you fill it in saying what advice you want and she sends it to you.
(UK. Yr. 10. F. 52)

Similarly, when asked about her experience of career advice Helen stated:

At the careers adviser here, there's like this booklet with all - with like job references, like business and stuff like that and there is a number next to it so if you write the number down on this piece of paper...you give her the piece of paper, she'll photocopy information about that thing so you can see what it's like and read about it and get information from it.
(UK. Yr. 11. F. 53)

The young people take the leaflets away with them, but will they read them? And with all the bureaucracy of having to give a number into the adviser in order to get the information will the students bother to go through the process? Such bureaucracy could discourage young people from seeking advice.

These days, the use of computers and the internet for careers advice are more likely to appeal to young people than a leaflet. One seemingly popular tool used by careers advisers in schools is the computer programme 'Kudos'. As Hubert points out, in his case it was used to find out what careers might be suitable for him:

Yeah, in high school went through the computer looking at what was suitable for me and also got to go through what was sort of ok for me and what was definitely not for me.
(UK. BUS. M. 70)

However, Hubert's description of the suggested occupations which the computer programme produced can only question the value of such a programme:

Worked through a list of all what's my favourite things, what do I like doing and it was all put on a computer and it came up with a list of jobs that would be good for me which were sign maker, leather maker, and embalmer [laughs].

(UK. BUS. M. 70)

While this may be helpful in broadening out career options (which was a concern expressed above), it does suggest that such programmes may better be served as starting points rather than definitive guides.

With the advent of the world wide web, access to information of all sorts is now at the fingertips of those who choose to search for it, as suggested by Douglas when asked how a young person would be able to know what types of jobs are on offer:

They can go on the internet, can't they? There's the web sites – there's the careers web site.

(UK. IT. M. 68)

As was pointed out in Chapter Three, Antigua, unlike the UK, has no statutory careers guidance programme, so it was not surprising to hear Antonio, a male fifth form student in Antigua say that he had not received any careers advice:

Not - not yet. I mean there are all subjects and I guess I research what subjects I'll need for my career. But nobody has really spoken to us yet. They have told us we'll have persons speaking to us but...

(AG.5th Frm. M. 17)

Antonio went on to explain where he had had careers advice from friends and relatives:

Most of my knowledge come basically from persons in the community talking to me influensively [sic]... I have a friend who is a pilot and he has told me about what he can do. I have a cousin who went to college in Florida and he sent me back two flight schools and you know they encourage me to do my best

(AG.5th Frm. M. 17)

However, although Antigua has no statutory careers advisory programme, the recent 'Career Affair' initiative' by two corporate bodies on the island has given some exposure careers guidance for young people. This initiative has already started to reap benefits, as Kola a fifth form student points out, that it has raised her awareness of the possibilities of other careers that may interest her. As she said:

It was interesting. Because, I actually found out that there are other careers I can choose from. And I found one that I was really interested in. Ahm, I would be a flight attendant. The lady explained to me and she told me that I have the personality and the looks for that job and in the next year I could even call her. She give me her number and tell me to call her. She'll call me for an interview.

(AG.5th Frm. F 16)

Asked whether she would be interested in taking up the interview offer Kola reveals that she would, but that she has also had another interview offer:

I think so, but also a lady from ACB also give me her card and told me as soon as they get ahm, vacancy she'll call me... when I finish State College. Just spend 2 years in State College, she'll call me.

(AG.5th Frm. F 16)

Similarly, Tisha, when asked whether or not she had received any information about different careers, replied:

Well yes, when they have the Career Affair and stuff down at Multipurpose Centre, I think it gives you a sort of experience, a kind of knowledge about the different careers that they have around.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 3)

She went on to explain her experiences of visiting the Career Affair:

I have been there once, which was last year. It was good. They had a variety of jobs and they were offering like over the summer vacation or whatever you could come and just sit in and get the kind of feel of that job. I think that's a good thing.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 3)

Beverly, a female engineering student, on the other hand also points out that some Antiguan schools also have their own careers programmes. At the school she attended, there was an annual career day where individuals from different organisations were invited to the school to speak to the students about their careers:

Well, they bring in people from different careers; the fire department, police, nurses, flight attendants and whatever. And I guess the one that best appeals to you, you go and see what they have to offer.

(AG. ENG. F. 26)

The timing of initial careers advice is also an issue. Here, the effect which context can have on an individual's perception of careers advice is revealed when the comments of two young people from the two countries are compared. In Antigua Antonio believes that it is important for young people to be given careers advice before the young

person makes his or her subject choices, as this can be crucial to being able to take certain subjects and therefore certain careers:

I think the time when you should be given advice is when you're having to choose your subjects between third or fourth. when you choose your subjects that you can't really pick up after that, you've already choose - right that's it, you have to settle with this... I really think they should give you advice before that, what the different jobs require so you know you have a better chance of choosing your subjects.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 17)

This reflects that, in the Antiguan system, it is difficult to pick up on a subject later, should you change your ideas for a career. However, on the other hand Marge, who has gone through the UK education system, makes a point typically voiced by individuals in this system:

I don't think at sixteen you can possibly decide what you want to do. I've only just now at thirty one decided where I want to go.

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

Having just decided at age thirty may be an extreme example, but it does reflect the changing pattern of jobs and careers, where people no longer have 'jobs for life', but may be expected to make several career changes in their lifetime. Marge's views are founded on the belief that young people will not be able to make such important decisions about their future at such an early age. However, this study has shown that many young people had developed their career aspirations from very early ages; and making the right subject choices at the right age is essential in both countries.

In section 6.6 the question was raised about the extent of the knowledge that teachers have on the various career options open to individuals. The same may be true of careers advisers, although they do have access to vast sources of information (as well as specialist training). Thus Marge's suggestion to encourage participants from different professions and industries to become involved in careers advice may be well founded:

I think it would be good idea to actually have people in from different industries going in, not just people that go in from the colleges.

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

She goes on to point out that bringing individuals from different fields of work would be beneficial in providing more in-depth, first hand information to young people:

You need people in the schools that are actually out there working, either in business or you know in the plumbing industry, any sort of industry, to go into schools and to speak to people about what they do and what they, you know... I mean you tend to find the army does it; get people going in about army careers but no other industry goes into schools and discusses.

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

This is done in a limited way in some schools in the UK – but the development of such a system would give young people a view of what the career is really like and enable them to either decide against the career, or if they really like the sound of what they have heard, could follow up with more information on whether they would like to take up the career.

As a few of the participants pointed out, careers advice could bring other benefits, for example by encompassing some of the wider social or job skills elements. For example Mark, when asked about careers advice he had received, immediately responded by describing their role in the development of skills for work rather than specific job advice. He noted that they were given a practical exercise in applying for a work placement which simulated the process of applying for a job:

We got given a telephone number of this placement and we had to ring up and tell them who you are and, like, tell them that you're interested in working at the place and convince them that you can work well and that and then you go there for a week and you do the work and prove it. I felt that were pretty helpful. Coz, like you get into it and you learn how to speak to people in the work place...

(UK. BUS. M. 60)

Mark notes that they were given another practical exercise which required them to balance a budget in order to survive on a particular salary:

And we did like this card thing and we got like a situation where we had this job and we had like a salary or something and we had to try and survive or something... we had, like you say, the rent and we had to see if we were in the red or in the black and try and get into the black.

(UK. BUS. M. 60)

Alex also notes that he was given practical advice on what to do in an interview:

Ahh, just sort of what to do in an interview. Cause that is... well, just [to] make sure you can get into the work.

(UK. IT. M. 63)

Hanah also notes that along with the careers advice she received was advice on drugs and other relevant social issues:

Oh well yeah, apart from careers... and that kind of thing, advice on social issues whether it's drugs or whether it's relationships and that kind of thing

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 56)

This type of advice, particularly on employment and job seeking skills, may be perceived as more relevant to students if it is offered by someone from outside of the school environment, especially careers advisers and those from the world of work.

Providing information and impartial advice and guidance to young people is the main function of school based career advisers. This section has provided a number of illustrations of the ways in which careers advisers might influence the career choices and decisions of young people. It shows that the quality of guidance given can be variable, a finding in accord with that of Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2008). Formal careers advice and guidance is not yet in place in schools in Antigua; hence this section summarises the findings in the UK only.

At its best, careers advice was very good, especially where the adviser was school based and already knew the student, or had access to his or her records. In these instances, the adviser would provide advice based on the student's interests and abilities. Advisers were also pragmatic, with many instances where they suggested 'fall back' careers when the young person's first choice was perhaps too ambitious or unrealistic. There was the suggestion that at times the young people were a bit unrealistic with their aspirations and the careers advisers made suggestions of more realistic alternatives. Such advice is particularly relevant in the culture of today where there is a sense that anybody can become a celebrity through sheer chance rather than ability and hard work.

Vocational advice was provided as well as guidance about college courses and other academic routes.

On the other hand, there is also evidence that, in some instances, the quality of advice was poor. Some students, especially if intending to enter vocational type careers, felt that careers lessons and careers advisers gave more attention to those who wanted to

do A levels and to go to university. They felt that the academic options were being 'pushed' while the advisers were 'not bothered' by those seeking a vocational career. This reaction may be explained by the findings of Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2008), who showed that young people were more likely to remain in school if their school had a sixth form. This suggests that the academic options are indeed being pushed in such schools. However, in this research, there were some instances where the young person had not seen an adviser at all.

Probably the most significant finding was that the careers advice tended to be narrow in its focus. Young people were asked what they wanted to do, and then information was provided on the course or career that they had already identified, often in the form of a leaflet. Thus there was no attempt to encourage the young people to take a broader perspective, to consider related careers, perhaps those that they had not thought of before, or even heard of. This suggests that, as no new ideas are being put forward, the career advisers are not being particularly creative in their suggestions. There was some use of a computer programme that suggested possible careers, based on psychometric-type information supplied by the student, but, in one case at least, the suggestions turned out to be so improbable that they were viewed with derision.

Antigua has no statutory careers advice in schools, but the current 'Careers Affair' programme appears to be well received, with young people being advised about different careers and being given valuable contacts.

There was disagreement about the timing of careers advice. Antiguan students, on the whole, wanted the advice to begin before they entered the fourth form, so that they could select the subject options that would enable them to pursue their chosen career. Some UK students thought this was too soon. This disparity does reflect differences in the two education systems, in that it is more difficult to change subject options, or pick up the subjects at a later date, in Antigua.

Even when they had received advice from a careers adviser at school, many of the young people did not see the careers adviser as having much of an influence on their choice of career. This may be because they had already had an idea, or had decided what they wanted to do and thus were only seeking further information, for example on college courses and what grades are needed, or how to apply for a particular job.

Certainly, from the findings in this study, the influence of careers advisers appears to be much less significant than that of parents, and possibly siblings and peers. Macrae *et al* (1996) and Payne (2003) had similar findings.

There are some practices which could enhance the careers advice already provided in the UK. For example, the custom of bringing individuals in from industry to talk to young people could provide a wider overview of careers as well as a first hand view of what an occupation is really like. Introducing young people to careers which they have not heard of before widens their scope and opens them up to career opportunities which they may never have thought of.

6.8 Influences of television

In Chapter Three it was noted that previous research has found that many young people's careers have been influenced by television. The fascinating, dynamic manner in which many careers such as law, forensic science and cookery are presented, on both factual television programmes and drama series has no doubt made these attractive to young people.

During the interviews conducted in this study, a few students indicated that the media played a part in influencing their decision to choose a particular career. For example Tisha, a fourth form Antiguan female student, noted that television was one of the influences which led her to decide to become a lawyer:

Well the television is one influence, and I think that they [lawyers] do great work because they help people in their trials and they help the innocent to be proven – the guilty to be proven innocent. Something like that. When you're innocent and you are being accused of being guilty you have to bring out the truth.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 3)

Beverly, a female Antiguan engineering student, noted that she got to know about nano-technology from seeing a programme about it on television:

I saw that on the TV. I can't remember what channel but I saw it on the TV and it looked really interesting.

(AG. ENG. F. 26)

Antonio, a male Antiguan fifth form student, indicated that his desire to become a pilot was from watching 'fighter planes, supersonic speed fighter planes' on TV:

Yeah television basically and then I started to think about it more and what also helped me along is that when I was younger I got a ride in a private plane and the man he was like encouraging me to really become a pilot and I actually got to sit down in the cockpit while the plane was in the air and actually hold the wheel not moving anything... but hold the wheel and steer it on the runway and I don't think I ever forgot the memories it's just always in my head...

(AG.5th Frm. M. 17)

He goes on to explain that while the initial influence was via the television, the desire was further reinforced through a ride in a private plane. Finally, Joseph a male UK catering student replied:

I used to always watch the cooking programmes and stuff like that. I just enjoyed watching it. I still watch Ready Steady Cook. I don't know why. It's interesting.

(UK. CAT. M. 81)

Watson and McMahon (2005) point out that little research has been done on the influence of the media on career choices. Although numbers were small, the findings in this study do suggest that the way in which careers are depicted on television may have the ability to attract young people. Murray (2006) has reported that TV dramas can influence career choices. This may be via observing specific role models in televised drama, but also by factual TV programmes or the many competitive shows leading to celebrity status, such as the 'X-factor', 'Strictly Come Dancing' or 'Masterchef'. Although television was only mentioned as an influence by a few participants (including one would-be chef), others may have been predisposed, subconsciously or otherwise, by things which they have seen or heard via the media. This could have contributed to the influences from other sources in making young people's career choices. However, the media appears not to be a key influence for the majority.

6.9 Financial influences on career choices

In the interviews conducted during this study, money was seen to be one of the most important factors to the young people when thinking about their careers. Finance (or lack of it) can have a marked influence upon young people's career choices and decision making. There are two aspects to this: firstly, how much a job pays; secondly, the finance needed to gain the necessary qualifications to enter the career.

6.9.1 Salary or pay

For some of the participants in this study, the salary a job would provide was the only factor that mattered; for example Paul, a male UK business student, when asked what factors were the most important to him in a job, replied:

The pay. The pay basically, yeah.

(UK. BUS. M. 59)

And similarly Bob, a male UK business student, also replied simply:

The pay.

(UK. BUS. M. 61)

For Michael, a male Antiguan engineering student, the issue of whether one job was ‘better’ than another was simply which one paid more:

*I just look at it as – when I look at other people I just look at it as money.
Who’s making more money I guess.*

(AG. ENG. M. 24)

However, for many others it was the balance between the money which they could earn and other factors such as whether they would enjoy the job, or whether they would be good at it. For example, Beverly, a female Antiguan engineering student, when asked what factors were most important to her noted:

That I’m gonna enjoy it and that it pays me well.

(AG. ENG. F. 26)

Similarly Davis, a male Antiguan engineering student, noted:

That I enjoy doing what I am doing. That I enjoy it. Yeah! And then after that it’s probably the salary.

(AG. ENG. M. 27)

For Davis, job enjoyment came first, with salary second. Meanwhile, although for Amie, a male Antiguan business student, salary came first, he also noted that the social atmosphere and good working relationships were important to him:

*The salary and if I’m comfortable at the workplace where I’m working.
You know like sometimes the boss you know, kind of push – pick on you or stuff like that or other co-workers and you don’t fell comfortable. You know. Those are the things I look for.*

(AG. BUS. M. 34)

The ability to perform in the role, or be ‘up to the job’ was another important factor, although again second to salary. Dominique, a female Antiguan fifth form student, stated:

Huh, practically I would say the salary... the standard of the business, and if I'm up to their standard.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

Jay, a male Antiguan engineering student also considered ability to do the job as significant:

What you're good at, the pay. If you're good at it, the pay

(AG. ENG. M. 23)

'Tweety' a female UK catering student, noted that she was initially interested in hairdressing but chose catering instead because she did not think that hairdressing would pay as much as catering:

I did think about other things. I thought about hairdressing but you don't get as much pay as what you do for cheffing... But hairdressers, I don't think it that good money.

(UK. CAT. F. 82)

However, she goes on to note that she had also thought about doing beauty therapy but it entailed too much studying:

And then I thought about doing beauty therapy but it was like loads and loads of work what you need to do, because my cousin she was doing it the same time as me...she was like saying, you need to know about when you're tinting you can't use certain things you've got to see if the customer is allergic...

(UK. CAT. F. 82)

She points out that she feels she is not good at studying and exams. There is a certain amount of theory that she has to cover in catering, but this is done in small chunks, with help from her head chef:

I can't actually crack down and do loads of questions unless I've got like people with me, like my chef he does after the end of each section... like we're doing pasta now. At the end of this section he'll sit down with us and do half of our questions with us but he won't tell us the answers he'll say right what's whatever to do with and you have to write it down; like everyone'll do it and we all might go through and say what's this and we'll all answer it together.

(UK. CAT. F. 82)

It is clear that having a supportive manager is helping 'Tweety' to study and thus succeed in her career.

Anne, a female UK year 10 student, wanted to become a psychologist; apparently she had previously considered hairdressing, but rejected it because of the pay:

I used to consider being a hairdresser but I know that I can do better than that 'coz they don't get particularly good money.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 42)

However, when asked whether she knew how much a psychologist earned, she replied:

No, but I know that they earn a fair bit. Erm, just from people telling me and things that I've heard, and it's... not a really common job and sometimes there's a need for psychologists.

(UK. Yr. 10. F. 42)

It was obvious from this and other responses that, at times, students did not have all the facts at their disposal when making their minds up about careers, even to the extent of which paid more. For example when Scott, a male UK year 11 student, was asked whether he would consider being a plumber he replied:

Not myself - no I wouldn't... It's just not my type of thing.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 57)

However when it was suggested to him that a self-employed plumber could command a high salary, he responded:

I would have gone for it.

(UK. Yr. 11. M. 57)

Clearly salary was an important issue for Scott, even to the extent of his reconsidering a job that he had previously regarded as not right for him.

6.9.2 Being able to afford to attend college

There were a number of examples where young people said they could not afford to stay on at school or college to study or train further, because they needed to begin working to earn money. The issue of financing further or higher education may be less of a problem for UK students as there are structures such as student loans and grants in place to assist them. However, for the average young Antiguan, the issue of finance can pose a barrier to their attending further or higher education.

Thus, when asked what sort of things could hamper them from achieving their goals, a number of Antiguan students mentioned the lack of finance. For example Dimitry, a male Antiguan fifth form student, replied:

Lack of funds. yeah...Most colleges you have to pay like a certain amount to go to, and my family is not really rich. So my mom was telling me that you know, if I want to go to university and stuff I would like have to go to college and then find a job until I have enough money to pay to go to university and then come back and work after I finish university.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 8)

And likewise Efa, a female Antiguan fifth form student, stated:

I would say finance. Because here in Antigua we don't... I mean to go further... I'd think the finance would be a problem because it's very expensive to study, I mean overseas and university and so on.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 9)

As there is no university on Antigua, students must travel overseas to continue their studies, which is very expensive. Princess, a female Antiguan fourth form student, who wants to become a doctor, pointed this out:

Because in order to be a doctor you need to do at least 6 or 7 years of university time and those university cost a lot of money and my family now... like with the working class and money sometimes – that big sum of money would be hard to come by.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 15)

But Roo, a male Antiguan engineering student, shows what can be done with determination. His life at school had been tough as, with four brothers and sisters, he often had to work to help to help provide financial income for his family. Thus it was not surprising that his mother wanted him to go directly into employment after completing school:

Actually she wanted me to go and work... she didn't say that but when it comes to money she just say... money and so forth that tight with her and she say might as well me go and me work...

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

This part-time employment has continued since he has been at college, with his working as a fisherman a large number of hours a week. He is very proud of what he has achieved:

Yeah! I have a liking for practically anything that is a challenge at first. Wanting to know how to do something. The first time I went to sea, right, I vomit like the first three times – I fed the fishes man - and on the third week or so when I was going I was like a pro... Yeah that is what pay my school fee send me to college, practically feed me and help out with bills at home and stuff.

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

However, his college work began to suffer because of all the time he was spending working:

When I finish from college we go out for three o'clock, haul pot from 'bout say five o'clock, go right down to eight o'clock /nine o'clock in the night... morning then be back up here again for college.

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

He was therefore sent to the college counsellor, who was able to arrange a compromise:

after I was falling back they send me to the counsellor and I told the counsellor my problem and I told her I really want to graduate. Really want to graduate, because I can't go through so much and I don't get to graduate. And she tell me ahm, do such and such... And now – every Friday now up here they give me every Friday off so I can go to sea.

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

When asked if he would give up his college course to work full time to earn more money, or give up the job if it became too much, he showed his resolve to continue with his course and succeed:

I would forfeit the job honestly. The reason why, because I already reach so far and I am the only person in my family that reach so far. I have two younger brothers on my mother side and a sister and a brother on my father side and I have to be like a role model for them... even if they pay me like a million – no, I not going to use such figures - even if they pay me a substantial set of money I will not quit college when I am so far. I had a chance to quit college while I was going to sea you know. I was making like four hundred dollars in a day.

(AG. ENG. M. 25)

Not all individuals are willing to make the necessary sacrifices to enable them to continue at college or university, when they could be working and earning money. Rather than invest in their future, they want to be able to afford all the latest product and fashions. This is likely to be true of some young people in both countries. For example, 'Twenty Three', a male UK catering student, was initially interested in becoming a mechanic, but was not prepared to accept to low wage offered in return for an apprenticeship even though it offered one day a week at college:

I was going to do an apprenticeship in mechanics but the money side of it again was difficult like getting paid £50 a week and then doing 9 to 5 Tuesday to Friday, in College one day a week, for fifty quid.

(UK. CAT. M. 79)

This student then embarked on a four year college catering course, but left after the first year because he still wanted to earn money:

I did my first year and then I still wanted more money so I left after the first year and went to work in a restaurant. That's when I really started to enjoying it.

(UK. CAT. M. 79)

Fortunately, he began to enjoy his work, and with the encouragement of his head chef, decided to go back to college after a year, to complete his training:

And it made me realise what I really need to be doing and the head chef gave me a couple of views on what I should do and he said go back to college and I think I agreed with him quite well. So I took a year out and then came back and then it really kicked off for the past two years.

(UK. CAT. M. 79)

Like Roo, he had finally realised that, if he was to succeed in his chosen profession, he would need to forego the salary while he undergoes the appropriate training.

6.9.3 Summary

There is no doubt that, for most young people, money was a central consideration when thinking about their future careers. For some participants at least, it was *the* most important factor that affected their career decision making. Job satisfaction was also significant, as was a consideration of working conditions and whether the participant was 'up to the job', but these were usually secondary to the salary that the job offered. Payne (2003) has also found that finance is a key factor in career decision making. She termed this the 'economic' model, suggesting that young people make their choices based on the economic benefits they expected to gain, in terms of salary. This does accord with the findings of this study. However, this is disputed by Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) who do not accept that young people make such decisions in such a rational way.

Sometimes students based their career decisions on long held assumptions about the pay in a particular job or profession, indicating that they don't necessarily have the correct facts available to them when making decisions. Vocational jobs, such as hairdressing and plumbing were generally considered to be low pay.

The other way that finance played a part in career choice was in the costs associated with staying on at school or going into training, as compared to going directly into work and earning a salary. Some students, especially in Antigua, were not able to

afford to train and had to leave school to obtain a job, sometimes because they were expected to contribute to the family finances, or just because the family could not afford to finance further study. A number of respondents indicated that they had part-time jobs to help finance their studies. Techanuvat (2004) proposed that young people are capable of calculating the direct costs associated with training and balancing these against the future benefits that a higher salary in the future will bring. This was apparent in this study.

However, other students, in both countries, were not interested in this. They just wanted to be out earning money, and therefore had no aspirations to undergo further training and ultimately achieve a better job. They were unwilling to put up with having little or no money while they trained, even with better prospects ahead.

Sometimes it is difficult to disentangle the notion of high pay from the perception of status; young people tend to perceive that higher pay is also related to status. Perceptions of status have already been discussed in Chapter Five, but the perception of how much a particular job pays is a strong enough influence to warrant it being considered separately. Finance does not feature specifically as a factor in the models put forward to describe career decision making (Hodkinson *et al*, 1998; Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, (2001), although this could be considered to be incorporated into Hodkinson *et al*'s 'lifestyle' choices and Foskett and Hemsley-Brown's 'lifestyle ambitioning'.

6.10 Decision making behaviour or choice types

In Chapter Three several models of choice making behaviour were explored. These have been developed over the years in an effort to describe the way in which young people make their career choices. The most recent of these is White's (2007) concept of decision making. White's actual focus was on how young people select the subjects which they are going to take at school, but this can be considered to be related to their ultimate career options.

White (2007) suggests that the decisions made consist of three types:

- inclusive - where the individual specifically wishes to take a certain course of action or selects a particular career outcome
- exclusive - which begins with the premise that some career outcomes are to be avoided if at all possible
- default - a choice is one in which the individual was not engaged in the decision making process, resulting in a course of action taken by accident or default.

Within the choice and decision-making process the final or ultimate goal is the choice of course or career itself. There is some evidence that White's categories of inclusive, exclusive and default can be applied to participants in this study. It is suggested that it could provide a practical way of looking at the types of choices young people make during their decision making processes, and is therefore discussed further in this section.

6.10.1 Inclusive choices

A number of the young people interviewed during the conduct of this study displayed what White (2007) has described as 'inclusive' choice types, in that they had a clear direction they wanted to follow and had made a proactive, positive selection of career. These young people were quite unambiguous about what they wanted to do. The 'inclusive' type of choice can be directly compared to the long held career aspirations discussed in Section 5.3, where many respondents had decided what they wanted to do from an early age.

For example, in response to being asked why she had chosen the particular course she was doing following, Geiss portrays a typical inclusive choice:

Well I always wanted to do accounting. Be an accountant and like I get to do it so I took the opportunity...I love accounts. I always love doing it...Since I was small, I always wanted to be an accountant.

(AG. BUS. F. 31)

Similarly, Steve also notes:

Well it's an area that I've... accounting is an area that I've been fond of from since I've been small. I always see myself working in a bank and also because of the fact that I like stats, I like figures and to me I just have a business mind... Well, growing up you just admire people working in a bank.

(AG. BUS. M. 33)

Steve's long held aspirations also appear to have been influenced by bank workers as role models. Similarly, Beverley points out that her decision to do electronics was a conscious one, which she intends will become a career which she will enjoy:

Well, anything that has to do with electronics and whatever I like, interested in that. So, not only did I choose it for this but instead of just doing a job, doing a job that I enjoy...

(AG. ENG. F. 26)

She further goes on to point out that her desire is long held:

Well I wanted to – I always wanted to work for NASA. So, I said engineering – I wanted to do like satellite engineering and whatever. And in order to get there I had to go through like – to go and do electronics.

(AG. ENG. F. 26)

Antonio, on the other hand, is still in school but has decided that he wants to become a pilot. Although he notes that he also enjoys water sports, his sights are geared on becoming a pilot and he is therefore planning to go to college and study the subjects he needs:

I always wanted to be a pilot but I always had a thing for the sea as well so it's kind of conflicting there... When I leave here, go up college for two years and then try to - maybe - try to study piloting... Ah, just basically acquire the subjects needed to become a pilot.

(AG.5th Frm. M. 17)

In the UK, asked how she decided that she wanted to go into media or ideally, movie directing, Hannah replied:

I've always been interested in films since I was a wee, wee little girl. Ahm I've grown up watching films and everything and I've always been more interested in how it was made and sort of the tricks of the camera and that kind of thing.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 56)

These young people clearly know what they want to do for a career and have known this for quite a while. They have therefore been able to outline the path which they

intend to follow in order to achieve their desired careers. They may have considered and rejected other careers en route, as Antonio had done.

However, ‘Hot Sauce’, a UK student, shows that the decision making process may be more complex than a simple inclusive/exclusive decision:

I always wanted to be a chef, always. I like food, I like tasting new foods, like trying new things. It's somewhere ... I thought, oh yeah, I aint really got good grades which would get me into any major places which I'd want to do anyway... ' Cause I don't like paper work or anything like that. So I thought with the grade I've got and cheffing was one of my choices, because I didn't have to have good grades to get into the college.

(UK.CAT. M. 83)

His choice to become a chef is clearly ‘inclusive’. Yet the way he reached this decision was by rejecting any career that involved ‘paperwork’, as he was not very good at it. Thus this could be viewed as an ‘exclusive’ choice, that he took the chef’s course to avoid paperwork, or because he felt he was not qualified enough to study anything else. This demonstrates that it is not always possible to ‘pigeon hole’ these decisions into simple categories; how choices are made can be a much more complex issue.

6.10.2 Exclusive choices

Just a few of the individuals in this study provided possible examples of ‘exclusive’ choices. They were asked, as a prompt during the interviews, if there were any particular jobs that they would not do. The respondents below pointed out the jobs that, in their opinion, were to be avoided. For example, Dominique replied:

I wouldn't be a hairdresser. Ahm, I'll never be a carpenter. And I would never be a pre-school teacher.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

Some of these exclusive choices may be based on impressions of the careers that had been gained from various sources, or they could be based on actual experience, as Dominique goes on to explain. Asked if she would be prepared to be a vendor, as is her mother, she replied:

No. I help my mother to sell like, by myself, but really I would not like to do that. No.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

Likewise, in Hannah's case she points out that she cannot envisage herself being a lawyer, thus excluding it from her choices:

I really, really can't see myself doing anything such as being a lawyer for example. I wouldn't find that kind of profession very interesting. I think if - if a person has an interest in a certain subject or a certain profession or a certain career... then that's what they would perform better in.

(UK. Yr. 11. F. 56)

Meneka had wanted to be an air hostess but made a pragmatic decision to exclude that from her choices after the 'events of 9/11':

Because after like the 9/11 and stuff like that, I said I not going be on no plane as a air hostess and have to be helping passengers before I can get off the plane, cause I have to put their life in front of my life and I don't want to put my life in front of no body so I prefer to put my life first, so my mind changed from being that.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 13)

This decision was compounded by the advice which Meneka received from speaking to a flight attendant:

Well, for the air hostess, the advice that she gave, she told me that I need to know at least two different languages along with English and I must be able to swim even though I can't swim they give you courses in swimming and I must be able to interact with ahm, one on one person don't matter who it is I mustn't treat no body higher or lower, treat everybody the same. So I told her ok, but I've changed my mind from being a flight attendant.

(AG.4th Frm. F. 13)

This 'exclusive' decision appears to have been made based on Meneka's values, and the realisation that the role would not be right for her. In a similar vein, a UK student, Hubert, is a vegetarian and therefore has an aversion to working with dead animals. He also says that he would not work with children or any job to do with lifting heavy objects:

Working with dead things [laughs]. Working with children. Work with heavy lifting.

(UK. BUS. M. 70)

Hubert is basing his exclusive decisions on his values, clear dislikes (working with children) and practicalities such as wanting to avoid heavy lifting. Buggs, having worked in a butcher shop previously, notes that he would not work with food again:

I wouldn't work with food again; not like that. That was horrible. I don't think I would like caring for old people. I don't think I'd be able to do that. Ahm, it wouldn't be too bad with children but I still wouldn't want to do it.

(UK. BUS. M. 74)

He continues by pointing out that he wouldn't want to work with people, especially the elderly, but also would prefer not to work with children. His first decision is based on his previous work experiences; likewise, Marge notes that she has worked in a factory and would rather not do that again:

I wouldn't want to particularly work in a factory. I've done it, but it's not something I see as a long term.

(UK. BUS. F. 72)

Respondents may have observed members of their family working long hours, and not want to follow suit. As Javed points out:

My uncle wakes up at seven in the morning and he closes the store at about half nine. So that's more than what you're allowed to do work. But that's what he does.

(UK. BUS. M. 77)

Similarly, Fred states that he would not want to be a chef due to the long hours that it would require. Instead, he wants to be a property developer, which although it might also require long hours, he replied:

Yea, but it's... I think it's more fun than being a chef. I wouldn't like to be in a policing either.

(UK. BUS. M. 71)

He goes on to refer to another, unconnected, exclusive choice. Likewise, Higgins notes that she would not do hairdressing or manual work:

Erm, I wouldn't do hairdressing or I wouldn't really like to do labour work. I'd rather do like stuff that I had to concentrate on and I had to like think about what I'm doing rather than something that I could do with my eyes closed sort of thing.

(UK. BUS. F. 69)

Higgins wants a job that will be intellectually stimulating. Liz has similar considerations, in that she would not want an office job as she thinks it would bore her. She also rules out becoming a hairdresser because she would not be good at it:

I wouldn't want an office job. I'd find that ... I think I'd just get bored. And there's just certain jobs I know I wouldn't be very good at. I wouldn't be very good at hairdressing.

(UK. Yr.11. F. 39)

Although the responses above may be construed as being 'exclusive' choices, in that the respondents have listed jobs that they would definitely not want to do, there is very little evidence that this 'de-selection' of various careers formed a significant part of their decision-making process. The 'exclusive' process only appeared to operate when the young person had had experience of a particular job, and subsequently rejected it, or had observed others, especially family members, in a job role and decided it was not for them. In essence this provides very thin evidence of the notion of exclusive choice making playing a major part in the decision making process.

6.10.3 Default choices

White's expresses his 'default' choice as one where there is a lack of engagement by the individual in the decision making process. White typically depicts the default choice as an individual who drifts into the option. In this study there were a few students who appeared not to have made a deliberate choice, but rather went along with what was offered, or was available, to them. The young people in this case can be said to have had no engagement in the choice and decision making process.

Like a number of the young British students who were interviewed, Buggs did not know what he wanted to do when he left school. He shows how he drifted into a number of different jobs, which he termed 'rubbish jobs', the last one being a trainee butcher at a meat packing plant. He illustrates how his career has coasted:

I don't stay in jobs very long, because I've been going through since school, looking for different things that I might like to do... I've done like... I've done engineering, plumbing, ahm ... I wanted to do more of a physical job but when I got into a situation of doing it I found I didn't like it as much as I thought I would. I didn't enjoy the job as much.

(UK. BUS. M. 74)

This may represent a typical pattern for a 'default' choice, although strictly speaking, Buggs has not yet made his actual career choice.

May, an Antiguan student, noted that she had chosen to go to college so that her parents could be proud of her, as they had never been to college. However, she went on to point out that she did not choose the course that she was doing:

I didn't choose this course, I didn't. It just happened that they placed me in this class and I just go along with it... First I wanted to go in the nursing course... too young. Changed to administration, the class was too full. So now I'm in accounts...

(AG. BUS. F. 32)

This is a marked example of a young person taking what was on offer, and changing from her desired career of nursing to that of accounts. Likewise, Missie notes that she had not made the choice to do accounting but simply placed on that course option:

Actually I didn't pick accounting, I picked business but I guess the class was full.

(AG. BUS. F. 37)

It does appear that, at least in Antigua, young people may be steered into particular college courses to make up the numbers.

Some young people may become victims of circumstances. For example, 'Super', a UK student, wanted to be a mechanic, but was let down when his pre-arranged apprenticeship fell through:

I wanted to be a mechanic at first and I come out of school with an apprenticeship and I were at [name] College and then about two to three months before I was supposed to start he rung me up and said that he'd started someone else on it...

(UK. IT. M. 66)

This appears to have forced him to make a rapid decision based on what was available at the time, and hence he took up a college course in IT. In reality, Super can be considered to drift into doing IT rather than what he really wanted to do. This example also illustrates the complex nature of career choices, in that 'Super' had initially made an 'inclusive' choice, but when this was no longer available, he had made a 'default' one.

6.10.4 Summary – inclusive, exclusive or default?

When reviewing the literature at the start of this research, White's (2002; 2007) choice model, in seeking to describe the manner in which young people make their career choices, appeared to be one that might be applied to this study. In reality, the evidence for this proved to be slim. There was considerable evidence of young people making choices that could be identified as 'inclusive' types, but this could be directly matched up to those which have been termed in this study as holding long term aspirations.

Very few examples were found to fit the 'exclusive' choice type unless the lists of jobs that individuals provided were considered to fit into this category. However, there was no evidence that these 'lists' formed an active part of their decision making process.

There were a few examples which accorded with the 'default' choice type, individuals appeared to have been steered into a particular career route which was not necessarily their first choice. Despite this study providing examples of the making of choices about which course to follow, as well as careers, it could be that the model is better applied only to subject option choice making within school, as it was in White's original research.

6.11 How young people think choices are made

During the interviews the young people were questioned as to the way they think individuals go about making their career choices. Their responses make a valuable contribution to the discussion. For example, when asked how a student might decide on what he wants to do, Jay, a male Antiguan engineering student, responds by offering three alternatives.

... it's like – it's either chosen by their parent – sometimes it's just a dream that they have that they want to fulfil. Or some just along the road they just pick up some kind of skill and continue on it.

(AG. ENG. M. 23)

The three alternatives that Jay is suggesting can be fitted into White's (2007) categories. Individuals that let their parents choose their career, might fall into White's (2007) 'default' type. Those who have long held aspirations which they are keen to fulfil would be 'inclusive'. However, those who develop interests 'along the road' could be subject to a number of different influences or could also be considered to be deciding by 'default'.

Kimmy, a female Antiguan business student, points out that financial considerations are a key factor for young people when making their career choices. She suggests that most individuals will aim for certain careers because of the high salaries associated with particular jobs, whereas others make their choices based on their abilities and interest.

Probably they...some people probably look on the salary first. Like if they study that they'd be getting piles of money rather than if they study this. And some again are... 'I love doing this I would like to get my degree in this whatever because I love doing this' and some like... they didn't get through with that one so they go into the other one or probably they didn't have the qualification to study here...

(AG. BUS. F. 28)

She also realises that, on the other hand, some may have been forced to pursue certain careers as a last resort because their hopes were dashed, perhaps as a result of not achieving the required grades subjects. Her views correlate with the study's findings in about the importance of financial considerations discussed in Section 6.9, and also accords with the findings in Section 5.3, where long held aspirations can be dashed when the required qualifications or grades are not achieved.

Steve, a male Antiguan business student, shares Kimmy's view about pay, but also recognises that choices may also be influenced by parents or peers:

Well one perhaps the pay. Or how they see the pay. Some - well, mainly because they try to choose something that they like to do. Something that they would enjoy doing. Some their peers influence them. Some their parents also influence them.

(AG. BUS. M. 33)

Taking up the theme that students will select either subjects or a career that they think they will enjoy or are good at, Dominique, a female Antiguan fifth form student, suggests that individuals may decide on a specific career path based on the grades they receive in certain subjects:

Ahm, some would choose depending on their grades. Some would choose because they favour the job. And [I] guess some would choose because that's what they always wanted to be or they had a role model that was that particular so they have a view of that all the time.

(AG.5th Frm. F. 7)

She also mentions that choices may be made because of what a student thinks they will enjoy, while others will have long held aspirations. She also identifies that particular

role models can be the catalyst in the career choices. Shekira, a female UK business student also recognises the existence of role models:

It's the people around them. If they look at people doing a certain job, they like they want to do that certain job and they work their way to that kind of job to get that career.

(UK. BUS. F. 76)

Higgins, another female UK business student, thinks that school performance is the primary influence on career choice. Using herself as an example, she explains:

Well what I did is I looked at what I were good at... which is learning and doing well at like exams and stuff and then you've got to think about what you like and what you want to do in the future. So I want a pretty good job, so I thought the best route for that was to go through college and university. But if other people didn't like learning and going to school the best route for them would be to go on a job. You've got to look at what you like and where you want to be in the future and decide which way you're going to go to get there.

(UK. BUS. F. 69)

She categorises individuals according to their performance in school and, based on school achievement, she firmly divides students into the 'academic' and 'vocational' routes.

'Buggs', a male UK business student, likewise highlights the issue of interest being important in making career decisions. However, he also realises that there may also be certain work factors that one must be willing to 'put up with', if not like:

I don't know. I think you got to take the certain facts that you like, certain factors that you can put up with.

(UK. BUS. M. 74)

This section, in presenting young people's views about how they themselves consider career choices to be made provides some interesting insights. They show that they have a good understanding of the many influences on career choices, not just the way they have gone about their own decision making, but what others might do. They are aware of individuals having long held aspirations or 'dreams' and of the disappointments that follow if grades are not achieved and the dreams cannot become a reality. They realise that there may be a number of influences on the decision making process, although parents and 'role models' were the ones most mentioned. Money is an important factor, they think, perhaps for the majority, although job enjoyment comes a close second. They also realise that some young people may drift into a job

without playing an active part in the decisions that led them there. Most respondents mentioned more than one possible way of career choices being made, showing that they understood that the process was many layered and complex. Only one overt reference to the presence of an academic/vocational divide was noted. There is little research evidence on how young people themselves see career decision making as taking place; these findings therefore provide a useful insight.

6.12 Summary of findings in relation to the theoretical framework of the study

This chapter has analysed, in detail, the various influences on young people's career decision making. It has also related the findings regarding how choices are made to White's (2002) model of choice types, and examined the respondents' own views about how they think that they and their peers make their career choices. These findings relate to the third aim of the study:

- To evaluate the various influences on young people's career choices.

These findings are discussed with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter Three, where existing research on the factors that influence career decision making was explored. Various models of career decision making were also examined, with a view to seeing how they fit with the findings of this study.

This chapter has provided many examples where the young people who took part in the study indicated that their career choices were influenced in some form, either by their parents, siblings, other family members, friends or peers, school teachers, career advisers, television, available finance or a combination of these factors.

From the many influences to which young people are subjected, it did appear that the influence of parents was one of the most significant. It was quite clear that parents' examples, views, advice, 'off the cuff' remarks and general attitudes had a significant effect on career choice and decision making. Parents supported and encouraged their offspring, firstly to complete their homework whilst at school in order to succeed academically, but also in staying on at school or college to take further qualifications. They tended to persuade them to aim high. There was no difference according to socio-economic status – this was not as important as had been found in previous

studies. If anything, parents who had not achieved were more likely to encourage their offspring to avoid the mistakes that they had made and aim for a more profitable career. Mothers played a particularly prominent role in this respect. Some parents also acted as role models for particular careers.

de Ruyter (2007) has also pointed out that as these parents want the best for their children they provide pragmatic, practical, achievable advice to their offspring. Often this advice pointed out the importance of a good education and the necessity for them to stay on in education and training. As these young people wanted to please their parents and make them feel proud of them, they tended to comply with such advice. These parents proved to be significant choice influencers in the young people's career choice and decision making process.

There was no evidence of overt parental pressure, as has been suggested in other studies. For the most part, the young people understood the reasons why their parents acted as they did.

Another strong choice influencer was the young people's siblings. Elder siblings, like their parents, were often seen to act as role models and provided the young people with valuable advice and information as well as being a source of encouragement. This may be due to young people having a preference for information which comes from individuals who are likely to have similar values as themselves and with whom they have had a long relationship, as suggested by Tucker *et al* (1997). Older siblings were able to provide information about colleges and courses that they had followed, and gave current advice. Competition between siblings could also spur young people on to achieve. This study, like Altman's (1997) notes competitive rivalry among siblings as one of the ways in which siblings serve to encourage one another to do their best.

Other family members, such as grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, are yet another source of influence on young people's career choice and decision making (Altman, 1997), who may encourage or dissuade them from certain career paths and, in certain circumstances, even direct them into a career path which they would ordinarily not choose.

Peer influence was also found to be another important influence in young people's career choice and decision making process. Peers were found to be a source of information on courses and colleges, and by persuading them that they would not be able to do well in life unless they worked hard to obtain the necessary qualifications. In this, like siblings, a competitive rivalry between peers was noticeable in encouraging achievement. Like Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) this study also found that young people were not likely to choose a career simply because their friends wanted to go into it, but on the contrary, would either ignore what was being said or say that while the career may suit the other person it did not suit them.

Teachers could be another powerful influence, obviously by stressing that if one worked hard and achieved, then job prospects would be better. They also acted as role models and, on occasions, endorsed particular subjects; a downside could be the tendency to promote academic subjects and courses (including staying on into the sixth form) even when a vocational route might be more appropriate for particular young people. This research has, however, raised the question about the impartiality of the careers advice provided by teachers and asks whether a lack of knowledge of business and industry may be a contributory factor. However, as also noted by Blenkinsop *et al* (2006) teachers can and do make a significant difference in guiding pupils towards suitable career choices. This was noticeable in a number of examples in this study, where teachers provided inspirational subject teaching or served as role models, thus encouraging their students to follow a particular subject or career.

While this chapter has provided some evidence of careers advisers influencing the young people in this study, the quality of advice was variable. Again, there was a tendency to promote academic routes, but vocational information was also available. However, for the most part the information, advice and guidance provided tended to be narrow and lacking a broad perspective. For example, the majority of young people reported only obtaining information on what was asked about, rather than being introduced to new ideas.

A particular advantage of the careers advice though, was the ability to bring some pragmatism, making more realistic career suggestions when young people had set their sights too high. There were reports of career advisers encouraging students to have fall-back and back-up plans where their aspirations might have appeared a little over

ambitious. Overall, the disappointing finding of this study was that careers advisers were not generally thought of as having much of an influence on the career choice and decision-making process of the young people. Parents, siblings and peers were seen as having much more of an influence by the young people in this study.

The media, especially television, played a small part, influencing a few participants via role models in drama productions or by factual programmes.

The availability of finance, and the likely salary that a job would command, were probably central to the majority of young people. To them, a high salary equated to job high status, a more important consideration than whether the job could be considered to be academic or vocational. Occasionally a lack of funding (especially in Antigua) meant that young people could not afford to stay on at school or go to college; but many were prepared to postpone earning money so that they could achieve more qualifications and aim higher in their career.

Evidence relating the findings regarding how choices are made to White's (2002) model of choice types was not found to be helpful. Although there was occasional evidence of an 'exclusive' or 'default' choice action, the whole decision making process was much more complex. 'Inclusive' choices largely corresponded to young people holding long term aspirations to achieve a particular career, and many other influences, including one or more of those discussed in this chapter, were brought to bear. When asked, most participants agreed that there had been many factors that influenced their choices, at different stages and over a long period of time.

As this study has shown, making a career choice is complex, and the factors that influence the process are also complex and multi-layered. Such a process requires a more complex model to capture how it may operate. That put forward by Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001), or an adaptation of it, based on the current findings, may provide a way forward. This will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions and Recommendations

I had no idea and when I talked to most of my friends they didn't either. None of us knew what we wanted to do. Because you can't ... If you think about it, we've done one thing in our lives and that's we go to school and then suddenly you get to a point where they're like right, so many millions of different things you can do. Choose one ... it's so difficult to do

(UK. BUS. M. 75)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on four main areas. It first of all summarises the overall findings of the study in the context of the aims outlined in Chapter One. The three specific aims of the study are:

- To explore young peoples' employment aspirations in Antigua and the UK
- To investigate young people's attitudes towards jobs and careers
- To evaluate the various influences on their career choices.

Secondly, it interprets the findings in the light of the literature reviewed and then relates the findings to the theoretical framework as set out in Chapters Two and Three. In the course of the Chapter a slight adaptation will be made to the Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) Model to include the Choice Types element of the White (2007) Model.

Thirdly, the Chapter makes comparisons, where appropriate, between the findings in Antigua and the findings in the UK. Finally, it concludes with an evaluation of the research and recommendations for policy and practice.

7.2 Summary of findings linked to aims

The first aim of this study was to explore young people's employment aspirations in Antigua and the UK. This was achieved through semi-structured interviews conducted with young people from both schools and colleges in the two countries. During the course of the interviews the young people were questioned as to the sorts of careers which they were interested in going into and when they had made this decision. School students, for example, were asked questions about how they chose their subjects, and

what was the basis for making these choices. In the case of the college students, they were asked, for example, what had made them choose to go to college, and why they had chosen to do the particular course they were doing.

The analysis of the findings in this study formed an interwoven compilation of the responses which the young people in Antigua and the UK gave regarding their choices of subjects and intended future careers. In many instances the young people indicated that the aspirations which they held had been formed in their early childhood. This revelation, however, was more prominent in Antigua than in the UK. Many of the interviewed students were quite aware of their own abilities and tended to make their subject choices based on these abilities and even had second choice options or back up plans in place should their primary preference not materialise. There were, however, those students whose aspirations could be considered to be a bit farfetched as their abilities did not match up to their aspirations and consequently they were not able to acquire the subjects needed for their chosen careers. It was also quite noticeable that a few students had no idea of what career they were interested in going into. These students were more prominent in the UK than in Antigua.

Young people may change their aspirations during the course of their lives; however, an early start provides them with a better opportunity for correct choices to be made as it also allows them a better opportunity to scrutinise the options available more thoroughly.

The second aim of this study was to investigate young people's attitudes towards jobs and careers. To determine these attitudes it was necessary to look at two issues highlighted in the literature review:

1. The understanding of the terms academic and vocational
2. The parity of esteem which exists between
 - i. academic and vocational qualifications
 - ii. vocational and academic (professional) careers

This was achieved by firstly using the questionnaires to probe the young people's attitudes by enquiring as to whether they planned to study academic or vocational subjects at college, and whether or not they would choose a vocational career, what they thought was most important to getting them a job and whether or not they agreed

with the statement that academic subjects were more important than vocational subjects. The questionnaires were then followed by interviews which sought to probe these attitudes deeper by asking the participants directly what they understood by the terms academic and vocational, whether or not they had been informed about vocational careers at school, whether or not they viewed certain jobs as being for certain people, what types of jobs they thought of being for 'brainy' people as compared to the types of jobs they thought were suited to the not so 'brainy' individuals.

From the results of the study it was clear that the young people lacked a clear understanding of the terms 'academic' and 'vocational' and quite a few had not even heard of the term 'vocational'. This appeared to have been as a result of the terms not being widely used at school and even when they were used they seldom appeared to have been properly explained to the young people.

In terms of careers, the terms 'academic' and 'vocational' proved to be slightly ambiguous as some careers could be considered to share elements of being both academic and vocational (eg doctors, lawyers, architects, etc).

Of significance to this study was the negative connotation which the young people in both countries held of vocational careers, thus seeing them as being low status. In particular in Antigua it was viewed as being for those individuals who had not done well at school

The third aim of this study was to evaluate the various influences on the career choices of the young people. The questionnaire asked the young people to identify which factors they saw as being most important to them: the chance to earn money, the chance to work for a big company or the chance to gain a qualification. It also asked the respondents to indicate the type of career their parents would like them to go into - whether academic or vocational - and what type of career their friends were thinking of going into - whether academic or vocational. The interviews expanded on these initial questions by probing deeper and also asking why. Questions included asking them how they knew about particular courses or careers. Where did they get advice about careers and jobs? What made them choose to go to college? Was the decision made by their parents? Who influenced them and how did they influence them?

From the results of this study it was quite clear that young people's career choices are in fact influenced by several different factors. The study has provided many examples of the young people themselves reporting having been influenced either by their parent, sibling, other family member, friend/peer, school teacher, career adviser, television, finance or a combination of these factors.

For the most part parents appeared to have the most significant influence over the young people. The young people picked up many of their attitudes and beliefs from their parents via the indirect route of general remarks or comments made by the parent. Most students reported being encouraged to aim high and this often meant doing well academically. It was quite noticeable that much of the influence tended to come from the mothers.

Although many previous studies have indicated socio-economic status as having a bearing on young people's aspirations and success, this study has found little, if any, evidence of such traits, save to say that in this study the parents who had not been able to achieve much academically tended to encourage their children not to make the same mistakes as they had done but rather that they should aim high and gain as many qualifications as possible. The encouragement to do well academically was, however, a general trend among parents. Parents often drilled into their offspring the importance of getting a good education and often encouraged them to stay on in education. This, however, was tempered by their rational thinking which could at times be seen to bring some young people's lofty aspirations back to reality.

Siblings also provided a significant influence for young people's career choices and decisions. Quite a number of the young people in this study spoke of having conversations about careers with their siblings, some even before their parents. The elder sibling was often a source of relatively up-to-date information on subjects, courses and colleges.

There was a noticeable competitive rivalry which tended to exist among most siblings. The younger sibling always felt that they had to do as well as or better than their elder sibling had done. While this may be useful in providing motivation in some cases, in

others it places the young person under undue stress at times, even pushing them to strive for success beyond their own abilities.

Depending upon the closeness of family ties, other family members could be just as influential as parents or siblings in encouraging or dissuading young people in their choice of career. However, the general trend was more in the form of role models.

Peers could be seen to have their own unique place in the domain of career influence. Like siblings they were often a source of information on courses and colleges. They also provided a competitive rivalry and a source of encouragement to do well.

Teachers have the ability to be a very powerful source of influence. At times they were able to act as role models and provide their own views on subjects and careers even though this was some times done via the indirect route of off-the-cuff remarks.

Similarly, career advisers also have the potential to be very powerful sources of influence. However, in this study there was a rather disappointing finding that young people did not see careers advisers as having much influence on their career choices and decisions. This may be due to the timing of delivery, the mode of delivery, or the amount of information which the young people see as being valuable to them.

The report of the influence was not as significant as might have been expected. However, there was a small influential role being played by a few popular television dramas.

Finance was found to be a significant area of influence. This was twofold, as on the one hand it related to whether or not the individual could afford to study and on the other hand it related to the amount which the job/career would pay.

7.3 Interpretation of findings in light of the literature

From the quotation at the beginning of the chapter it is possible to conclude that many young individuals in the UK leave school not knowing what they want to do in life as a job/career. While there may be fewer examples of this occurring in Antigua than in the UK there are a few who also leave school not knowing what they want to do as a career. The quotation above thus reinforces the position why careers education and guidance is important and why it needs to be started a lot earlier. It really underlines the point that careers education and guidance needs to be started at a much earlier point than is currently the case because there are so many young people ending up in their final year of school and even leaving school and not knowing what they want to do. Why do they not know what they want to do? In most cases it is simply because the discussion of careers has been left until just before they are ready to leave school.

From the results of the questionnaire and interview data certain stereotypical perceptions of the various subjects, courses, qualifications and jobs/ careers were identified among the young people in both countries.

During the interviews with the young people they were asked why they had chosen to do the particular course they were doing. How did they decide upon what they wanted to go into? What made them choose to go to college? Were there any particular jobs which they would not do? More generally they were also asked to explain how a young person decides upon what they wanted to do; and how a young person decides what they will do when they leave school or even college. The responses to these questions provided a basis for understanding how these young people went about making their career choices and decisions as well as their understandings of the way in which others did so.

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) noted that:

At each stage the impact of earlier choices constrains, in some way, the options that are available, and so, ultimately, shapes the choices that a young person can make as s/he moves from education or training into the labour market as the first formal step in their economic working life or career.

(p.173)

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) go on to point out that previous research carried out by Dearing (1996) has criticized the timing of careers guidance. They further point out a number of research studies which have indicated that career choices are often

made at an early age (Kelly, 1989; Keys and Fernandes, 1993; Keys, *et al*, 1995; Foskett and Hesketh, 1995; Foskett and Hemsley-Brown 1997). However, despite all these studies raising the importance of early careers education there still remains no careers education being carried out in primary schools in the UK.

From the results of this study it can be safely said that there is no set manner or time span in which young people go about making career choices. Hodgkinson *et al* (1996) are indeed correct in saying that the way in which young people make their career choices cannot be adequately described as being rational or irrational. Each individual makes his/her choice based on a number of factors which have been labelled in the Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) model as context, choice influencers and even the choosers themselves where both external structures and individual agency come into play by reacting with each other (Wright, 2005).

The results have shown that young people may be influenced by any one factor or a combination of several factors. Through these influences they may develop a liking for a particular subject, or career. The reverse is also true; they may alternately be dissuaded from pursuing a particular career. The results have also shown that parents have a significant influence on young people's career choices and are in agreement with the findings of previous studies such as Payne (2003), Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (2001) and Blenkinsop *et al*. (2006). Thus, one way in which an individual may choose a particular career is by being persuaded, urged or encouraged by his or her parent.

Young people may choose certain careers over others either:

1. due to the way in which they perceive themselves, or
2. due to the way in which they perceive the job/career, or
3. through a combination of these perceptions.

They may be forced to forego certain aspirations due to:

1. educational constraints
2. financial constraints

This study has highlighted the fact that some young people may not be able to pursue the career which they had aspired to go into due to not having gained the required

subjects or qualifications or due to the lack of finance to pay for their studies or because they may have to work to support their family. In some cases the constraint may even be of a more structural nature where the subjects were not offered in the area where the person resides. This could lead to having to travel long distances or even overseas which would be further compounded with the issue of financial expenses.

There are careers which individuals choose and there are careers which individuals are compelled to choose. In other words there are those individuals who have made a conscious decision about the career which they have aspired to go into and have been able to go down that route. Conversely, there are those individuals who have not been able to achieve their aspiration for one reason or another and have been forced to do something else.

The literature review has already shown that the process of career choice and decision making is complex and multi layered. The findings of this study have supported this claim and have provided examples of this multi-layered course of action. Personal experience was also found to play a part in the choice and decision making process.

7.3.1 Comparison of findings with theoretical models of decision making

Three main issues arising from the literature identified in Chapter Two were:

1. There is a lack of understanding of what the term ‘vocational’ means.
2. Vocational courses and qualifications do not carry the same apparent value as academic courses and qualifications.
3. There is a perception that the more qualifications one attains, the better the job one is likely to get and the better will be the pay.

Chapter Three identified three main theories that arise from the literature relating to how young people go about making their career choices. These are:

1. Payne’s (2003) description of the decision making process as *economic, structuralist* or *pragmatic rationality*.

2. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown's (2001) model of choice and decision making – *context, choice influencers, choosers and choice.*

3. White's (2007) model of types of choice - *inclusive, exclusive and default.*

The way in which young people perceive different jobs and types of employment can prove to be a crucial factor in their career choice. In Chapter Two it was noted that Davies and Biesta (2007) found that the young people in their study had a lack of understanding of the term vocational. This was similarly found to be the case with the young people in this study. Although there were a few who had a slight understanding the vast majority of those in the UK had no clear understanding of the term and a lot of the Antiguan tied in vocational with people who failed at school, people who messed around, people who dropped out. They were the ones who went into vocational careers. They used the term to mean really low level subjects, courses and careers. They have an idea that it is very, very low status. This ties in with the fact that those who do not pass their common entrance exams have to go to the post-primary level (or junior secondary level as it is now called) and are given more vocational subjects there to do. Even when they transfer into secondary school they are restricted from doing certain subjects.

One thing that came through very powerfully is that the idea of academic and vocational means nothing to young people, yet there is a wealth of literature built on this notion. Status is important, money is important, even pleasing their parents is important, but academic versus vocational means absolutely nothing to young people. It is educationalists who categorise certain subjects and jobs as being either academic or vocational. Young people in this study did not usually refer to jobs in terms of being academic unless asked about a vocational career.

The young people in this study had a definite hierarchy in their minds of subjects, courses and careers. However, this hierarchy was not related to academic versus vocational rather it is a hierarchy based on status and money. In line with Cropper 1998, who noted that parents were likely to pressure their children to do academic subjects regardless of their ability due to the perceived status this study saw Antiguan mothers really wanting the best for their children and they appeared to be even more involved than the fathers.

The difference in the manner in which young people are made to transfer through school in Antigua compared to the way in which they are allowed to do so in the UK may play a part in the differences in attitudes between young people in both countries. In Antigua, unless you pass a certain number of subjects you are not allowed to move up to the next class (year group). This highlights the importance of academics in progression, whereas in the UK one can go through school without having to pass a single subject. However, the benefit in the UK is that there are so many more colleges and so many more resources that they can tap into and make something of themselves which makes it a lot easier for the UK student than it is for the Antiguan student. Even at college level there are sort of remedial type basic skills being offered.

The results of this study have, in effect, shown the Foskett and Hemsley Brown (2001) Model to encompass each of the three fundamental models described by Payne (2003). It contains elements of the economic, the structuralist and the pragmatic rationality. However, whereas it was the view of Payne (2003) that individuals tend to follow one of these three models, it is the view of this study that no one model is sufficient to describe the choice and decision making process of young people as most young people tend to utilise combinations of the three models in the choice and decision making process. For example a student may utilise the economic model as he/she would like a career that pays well but also needs to consider the structuralist element of having the necessary qualifications and also pragmatically the likelihood of them being able to get a job in the field after having completed their studies.

The central model which this study has employed has been Foskett and Hemsley-Brown's (2001) model of choice and decision making in education and training. This could be improved and made more appropriate for this context by being adapted slightly to include reference to White's (2007) model of decision making behaviour. It is felt that by combining the element of choice types from White's model with Foskett and Hemsley-Brown's model it would be possible to provide a model which is closer to the situation found by this research study.

Thus, the adapted model (Figure 7.1) puts the choice at the centre of the model to illustrate that the choice is the main objective. The central border with the label 'The Choice' divides the two basic choices; either go directly into a career or continue in

education through a particular pathway/programme in a particular institution. In this adapted model, what Foskett and Hemsley-Brown had labelled as the ‘Choosers’, has now been relabelled as ‘Internal Perceptions’, showing that while these factors are about the choosers, they are more than just a description of them. They are more about the factors that the chooser takes into account in making his or her choice. The addition of White’s Choice Types makes the model more complete and putting the Choice at the heart of the process helps to clarify the factors that influence the choice.

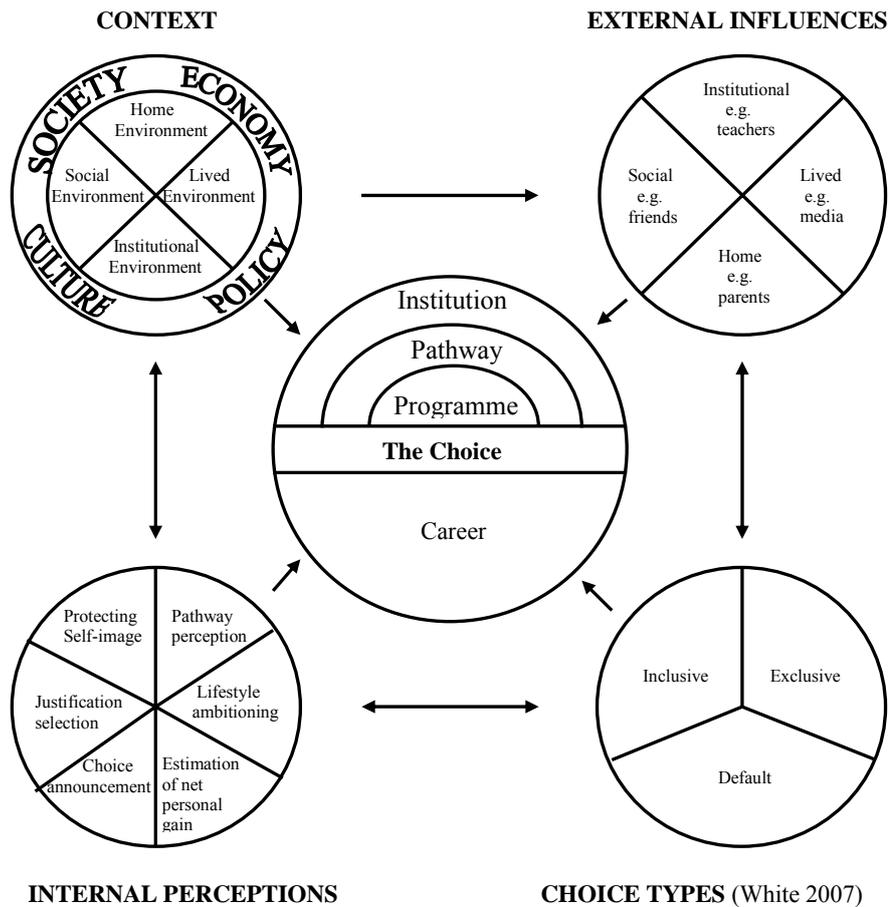


Figure 7.1 Adapted Foskett and Hemsley Brown (2001) Model to include White (2007) Choice Types.

7.4 Comparison of findings between Antigua and the UK

What this study found with the UK is that unlike Antigua very few students in the UK had any long-held aspirations compared to the Antiguan students. This study found that most of the students in Antigua had already decided on the career that they wished to pursue and geared themselves for this by choosing to study subjects which were relevant to the career of their choice. They had decided ‘well I want to do this’ – it

might change along the way but from way back they have had these aspirations that 'I want to be this' or 'I want to be that'. There was not much evidence of this in the UK.

One of the noticeable things coming out of the interviews conducted in the UK was the response received when the students were asked about how they made their subject choices. Most of the students appeared to have an attitude which suggests that they would make their choices after they did their GCSEs. Then, depending upon the subjects which they were successful at they would see what jobs/careers they could get into. Whereas in the case of Antigua, the students planned ahead up and decided 'I want to be this' or 'I want to be that' (to use the students' phraseology). In general, the Antiguan students appeared to plan more than the UK students in terms of their future careers. In addition, one of the things that was notably seen was that they were more prone to say that they need to get the subjects in order to get a good job than students in the UK.

In both countries there were students who had their aspirations thwarted by not being able to take the options they wanted.

One of the things that this study picked up in Antigua was that because of the rigour that the students there have to go through, in that year by year they have to pass exams to be promoted to the next class, they have a more realistic knowledge of how they are doing and either by what teachers say to them or by looking at their grades themselves they are able to figure out whether or not they will be able to make it to the A' levels or choose another course of study, a lot more than their UK counterparts. And because they are planning much more carefully they are therefore much more likely to make the right choices rather than not.

The reluctance of young people in the UK to make early choices of the career which they wished to go into was apparently more of a cultural thing than anything else, because even speaking to some of the teachers or people in general, the general response was that a person would not know what they want to do that early. Young people in the UK were not expected to know what they want to do for a career even by Year 10, whereas in Antigua there is an expectation that they would have an idea of the sort of career they would like to go into by then. In Antigua young people are routinely questioned from a very early age about what they would like to become. While going

through school, friends, family and teachers constantly enquire of them what they would like to be when they grow-up. On the other hand, in the UK it was found that the young people for the most part went through school without thinking about what job/career they would want to go into, making up their minds after they had left school because there were so many more opportunities available to them. This may be said to be because of the industrial history of the UK where, as described by Willis (1977), the attitudes of the so-called 'likely lads' were that they would just transition from school into a job. This attitude is still present, where the idea is that they would easily find something to do after they finished school. Also due to the large number of post-compulsory education institutions in the UK young people can always opt to continue in education and either redo their GCSE or do an FE course. The limited number of post-compulsory education institutions in Antigua makes this a less likely option.

One of the things this study has found here in the UK within the literature is the claim that social class is a very high indicator of where one will go (Ryrie, 1981; Ball *et al*, 1999; Bandura *et al*, 2001; Payne, 2003; Wright, 2005; Blenkinsop *et al*, 2006). In Antigua I think that social class is an indication of how far a student will be able to go only in terms of the financial capabilities. Here in the UK, the opportunities are much wider open than in Antigua. For example, if a student wanted to go to university and he/she came from a poor family, the prospect of that person succeeding to do so is very limited. The first thing is that Antigua does not have a university (except for the two offshore universities which specialise in medicine). In the past 10/12 years Antiguan students have been able to complete their 1st and 2nd year of the University of the West Indies courses in certain disciplines at the college in Antigua. However, they will still have to travel to Barbados or Trinidad to complete the third/ final year. Although this option is still available to students in Antigua, the less privileged are faced with the problems of financial constraints as well as being able to take the time out to go. Many contemplate the prospect of obtaining a scholarship but this cannot be guaranteed because scholarships very limited. Whereas in the UK, one can apply for a grant/loan, go to university and only have to worry about paying back after one has completed the course and started to earn over a certain threshold. So a loan makes a big difference. However, many students who come from poor backgrounds do very well in school. Coming from a poor background has nothing to do with their intelligence or ability. Opportunities for such students are then realised through the efforts of parents who desire better for their children than they had and who remain resolute and work

unfailingly to pay for their schooling some times even putting up all they possess to secure a loan to fund them or by the few private and government scholarships available to them.

7.5 Original contribution to knowledge from the research

In achieving the aims set out for this study in Chapter One, a number of methodological approaches have been undertaken as discussed in Chapter Four. This highlighted a number of similarities and variances between Antigua and the UK (see above). The extensive interviews with the young people enabled a full exploration of their employment aspirations which revealed that most individuals had high aspirations, some of which had been formed from early childhood. It also demonstrates young people's perceptions of various jobs/ careers and their attitudes towards them. The findings from this study have provided examples of the multilayered nature of the factors which influence young people's choice and decision making process.

Fisher (1999) notes that comparative studies looking at various facets of vocational education are rare. While this is not a full blown comparative study it looks at career choice and decision making in two distinctly different countries. Thus, it provides an international base of career choice and decision making flavoured with aspects of comparison. This adds to the international perspective of vocationalism as it applies to the career choice and decision making of young people.

One of the strengths of this study lies in the way in which it has been able to give a voice to the way in which the young people themselves view how career choices and decisions are made. In essence this has provided a way of understanding the way in which young people at school and college in Antigua and the UK think about the type of career which they are planning to go into or would like to go into. In doing so it has been able to provide examples of the factors which influence these choices and decisions.

7.6 Recommendations arising from the study

This study has provided substantive implications for policy and practice. It has shown that there are lessons to be learned from both countries.

Recommendations for government and policy-makers

- First of all, in the case of Antigua it is recommended that there is need for a formal careers education and guidance service to be established, accompanied with the relevant necessary trained personnel posted in all schools.
- Careers Education and guidance has been found to typically take place during the final two years of secondary schooling. In the UK the Education Extension of Careers Regulation which came into force in September 2004 extended careers education and guidance down to year 7, but as was noted in chapter three, the reality is that this seldom goes lower than year nine and the format, content and quality of delivery continues to vary from school to school. A review of the literature on careers choice and decision making has pointed out that formal careers education and guidance appears generally to have less influence on choice at 16 than family (Maguire et al 1996; Payne, 2003). Although by no means a new recommendation this study reiterates the call for policy makers to institute legislation which will ensure career guidance is delivered in both primary and secondary schools.
- The Government needs to publish a yearly list of the careers/jobs which the country has shortages in and requires filling.

Recommendations for careers advisers and teachers

- Small and McClean (2002) note that exposure to owners of businesses impacts positively on one's attitude towards entrepreneurship. Therefore, getting people to come into the schools from industry to speak to students about their jobs/careers may have a positive impact on their careers education and guidance.
- Careers education needs to provide young people with a clear understanding of what the terms 'academic' and 'vocational' mean. Explaining the value of both while at the same time aiming to dispel the stigmatisation commonly placed on vocational type careers.
- As Careers Information Advice and Guidance is an essential component to allowing young people to make sound rewarding career choices and decisions

careers advisers and careers teachers need to widen young people's knowledge of careers open to them by raising their awareness of careers that are:

1. in demand by the country
2. not commonly spoken about.

7.6.1 Suggestions for further research

Extending the research on a larger scale and doing research of a longitudinal nature to track students across a wider and more national sample from the beginning of their schooling through to getting a job would provide an even clearer picture of the Career choice and decision making process.

A longitudinal study following participants to see whether they stuck to their career choices. This would allow for tracking how much their attitudes, aims and career choices changed. How much those that were long held were actually carried.

That is set against the kind of international picture that people don't have jobs/careers for life. It is expected these days that individuals will have more than one career during their lifetime.

The study revealed that in both Antigua and the UK there was a lack of understanding of what the terms academic and vocational mean. This needs to be addressed within the careers education curriculum.

This study suggests that pay plays a significant role in influencing young people into a career or not. Career advisers therefore need to be equipped to respond to questions regarding the salaries which various careers typically pay.

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Appendices

Antiguan School Questionnaire

Dear student,

Thank you for your participation in this study. In the event that you do not wish to continue, you may withdraw at any time. This questionnaire has been designed to find your views on Education and Training. Information will be used in an anonymous form and care will be taken to ensure that you cannot be identified.

Directions

Please answer all questions **ticking only one box unless otherwise stated**.

1. Gender

Female

Male

2. How would you describe your ethnic background

White

Pakistani

Black Caribbean

Bangladeshi

Black African

Chinese

Black Other

Asian Other

Indian

Mixed Race

Other (specify) _____

3. Please list the subjects along with the grades which best indicate the qualifications with which you expect to leave school.

Subject	Award	Grade	Subject	Award	Grade
e.g. IT	ORSA	B	e.g. Chemistry	CXC	F

4. What do you plan to do when you leave this school?

- ₁ Get a job
- ₂ Go to College (A'level)
- ₃ Go to College (non A'level)
- ₄ Go to another institution
- ₅ Do not know

5. If you plan to go to further your education, which institution do you plan to attend?

- ₁ Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education (ABICE)
- ₂ Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Information Technology (ABIIT)
- ₃ Antigua State College
- ₄ Other (specify) _____

6. What do you plan to study? (Tick categories that apply and list subjects)

- ₁ Vocational subjects (City and Guilds, ORSA)

- ₂ Academic subjects (A' Levels, CXCs)

- ₃ Other (specify) _____

7. If you plan to get a job when you leave school, what type of job do you plan to get?

₁ Part time

₂ Full Time

8. Is your father/stepfather/male carer employed?

₁ Yes

₂ No

₃ Retired

₄ Deceased

₅ Do not know

9. What is/was you father's/stepfather's/male carer's occupation? (e.g. cleaner, sales clerk, nurse, dentist etc.) _

10. Is your mother/stepmother/female carer employed?

₁ Yes

₂ No

₃ Retired

₄ Deceased

₅ Do not know

11. What is/was your mother's/stepmother's/female carer's occupation? (e.g. cleaner, sales clerk, nurse, dentist etc.)

12. Who is **mainly** responsible for looking after you?

1 Carer

2 Both Parents

3 Father

4 Brother

5 Grandfather

6 Grandmother

7 Mother

8 Father and Stepmother

9 Mother and Stepfather

10 Other (specify) _____

13. How often have you been to the school library in the last six months

1 Never

2 Occasionally

3 Once a month

4 More than once a month but not weekly

5 Once a week

6 Once a day

6 More than once a day but less than weekly

14. If yes, for what reason? (Tick all applicable)

- ₁ To meet my friends
- ₂ To borrow a book
- ₃ To study
- ₄ To work
- ₅ To look up things
- ₆ To get away from everyone else
- ₇ To look up information about courses and careers

15. Do you have a part time job?

- ₁ Yes
- ₂ No

16. If so what?

17. Why did you want to get a job?

- ₁ Money
- ₂ Experience
- ₃ Parental advice
- ₄ Other (specify) _____

18. What major benefit did you receive from doing this job?

- ₁ Money
- ₂ Experience
- ₃ Problem solving
- ₄ Working with people

19. How well is the school preparing you for the world of work?

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Please explain reason given _____

20. What sorts of things should schools teach?

Skills

Academic Subjects (e.g. English, History, Chemistry)

Crafts (e.g. metalwork, woodwork, cookery)

Sports (e.g. Football, Cricket, Rugby, Athletics)

21. Do you like school?

Yes

No

22. What are the 3 things you like most about school?

23. What are the 3 things you dislike most about school?

24. What do **you** think is **most** important to you getting a job?
- 1 Vocational qualifications (City and Guilds, ORSA)
- 2 Academic qualifications (A' Levels, GCSEs)
- 3 Skills
- 4 Experience
- 5 Do not know
25. Would **you** choose a vocational (non-academic) career (e.g. Plumber, Hairdresser, Secretary)?
- 1 Yes
- 2 No
26. How has your choice in making this decision been **most** influenced?
- 1 by parents
- 2 by teacher(s)
- 3 by friend(s)
- 4 by a careers adviser/connections personal adviser
- 5 by a particular trade/profession
- 6 Other (specify) _____
27. What type of career(s) would your parents like you to go into? (Tick category and state career)
- 1 Vocational type (e.g. Plumber, Hairdresser, Secretary)
- _____
- 2 Academic type (e.g. Lawyer, Doctor, Economist)
- _____
- 3 Do not know

28. What type of career(s) are your friends thinking of going into? (Tick category(s) and state career(s))

₁ Vocational type (e.g. Plumber, Hairdresser, Secretary)

—

₂ Academic type (e.g. Lawyer, Doctor, Economist)

—

₃ Do not know

29. What do you see as being the **main** purpose of going to school?

₁ preparation for the world of work

₂ learn new things

₃ meeting people

₄ Other (specify) _____

30. Which one of the following do you see as being **most** important to you:

the chance to earn money

₂ the chance to work for a big company

₃ the chance to gain a qualification

₄ Other (specify) _____

31. Do you plan on going to University?

₁ Yes

₂ No

32. How much do you agree with the following statements?
 (show by placing a tick in the column which best describes your opinion)

	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Vocational subjects have a high status					
Academic subjects have a high status					
Vocational courses are difficult					
Academic courses are difficult					
Academic subjects are more important than Vocational subjects					
People with lots of CXC's get the best jobs					
People who do GNVQ foundation level courses have a better chance of getting a job than those who do NVQs					
Antigua's economy depends on people with high academic ability rather than technical skills					
People with high academic ability can easily adapt to technical tasks					
Bright kids get the best jobs					
If I do some academic subjects people will think that I am bright					
If I chose to do a vocational course people would think that I am not bright					

Thank you very much for having taken the time to complete this questionnaire.

John J. Swift

UK School Questionnaire

Dear student,

Thank you for your participation in this study. In the event that you do not wish to continue, you may withdraw at any time. This questionnaire has been designed to find your views on Education and Training. Information will be used in an anonymous form and care will be taken to ensure that you cannot be identified.

Directions

Please answer all questions **ticking only one box unless otherwise stated**.

1. Gender

Female

Male

2. How would you describe your ethnic background

White

Pakistani

Black Caribbean

Bangladeshi

Black African

Chinese

Black Other

Asian Other

Indian

Mixed Race

Other (specify) _____

3. Please list the subjects along with the grades which best indicate the qualifications with which you expect to leave school.

Subject	Award	Grade	Subject	Award	Grade
e.g. IT	GNVQ	B	e.g. Chemistry	GCSE	F

4. What do you plan to do when you leave this school?

- 1 Get a job
- 2 Get an apprenticeship
- 3 Go to FE (Further Education College)
- 4 Go to 6th Form College
- 5 Go to another school (6th Form)
- 6 Do not know

5. If you plan to go to college, which college do you plan to attend?

- 1 Calderdale College
- 2 Greenhead College
- 3 Huddersfield New College
- 4 Huddersfield Technical College
- 5 Other (specify) _____

6. What do you plan to study? (Tick categories that apply and list subjects)

- 1 Vocational subjects (NVQs, GNVQs, BTEC, AVCE)

- 2 Academic subjects (A' Levels, GCSEs)

- 3 Other (specify) _____

7. If you plan to get a job when you leave school, what type of job do you plan to get?

Part time

Full Time

8. Is your father/stepfather/male carer employed?

Yes

No

Retired

Deceased

Do not know

9. What is/was you father's/stepfather's/male carer's occupation? (e.g. cleaner, sales clerk, nurse, dentist etc.) _

10. Is your mother/stepmother/female carer employed?

Yes

No

Retired

Deceased

Do not know

11. What is/was your mother's/stepmother's/female carer's occupation? (e.g. cleaner, sales clerk, nurse, dentist etc.)

12. Who is **mainly** responsible for looking after you?

- 1 Carer
- 2 Both Parents
- 3 Father
- 4 Brother
- 5 Grandfather
- 6 Grandmother
- 7 Mother
- 8 Father and Stepmother
- 9 Mother and Stepfather
- 10 Other (specify) _____

13. How often have you been to the school library in the last six months

- 1 Never
- 2 Occasionally
- 3 Once a month
- 4 More than once a month but not weekly
- 5 Once a week
- 6 Once a day
- 6 More than once a day but less than weekly

14. If yes, for what reason? (Tick all applicable)

- ₁ To meet my friends
- ₂ To borrow a book
- ₃ To study
- ₄ To work
- ₅ To look up things
- ₆ To get away from everyone else
- ₇ To look up information about courses and careers

15. Do you have a part time job?

- ₁ Yes
- ₂ No

16. If so what?

17. Why did you want to get a job?

- ₁ Money
- ₂ Experience
- ₃ Parental advice
- ₄ Other (specify) _____

18. What major benefit did you receive from doing this job?

- ₁ Money
- ₂ Experience
- ₃ Problem solving
- ₄ Working with people

19. How well is the school preparing you for the world of work?

1 Excellent

2 Good

3 Fair

4 Poor

Please explain reason given _____

20. What sorts of things should schools teach?

1 Skills

2 Academic Subjects (e.g. English, History, Chemistry)

3 Crafts (e.g. metalwork, woodwork, cookery)

4 Sports (e.g. Football, Cricket, Rugby, Athletics)

21. Do you like school?

1 Yes

2 No

22. What are the 3 things you like most about school?

23. What are the 3 things you dislike most about school?

24. What do **you** think is **most** important to you getting a job?

- Vocational qualifications (NVQs, GNVQs)
- Academic qualifications (A' Levels, GCSEs)
- Skills
- Experience
- Do not know

25. Would **you** choose a vocational (non-academic) career (e.g. Plumber, Hairdresser, Secretary)?

- Yes
- No

26. How has your choice in making this decision been **most** influenced?

- by parents
- by teacher(s)
- by friend(s)
- by a careers adviser/connections personal adviser
- by a particular trade/profession
- Other (specify) _____

27. What type of career(s) would your parents like you to go into? (Tick category and state career)

- Vocational type (e.g. Plumber, Hairdresser, Secretary)
- _____
- Academic type (e.g. Lawyer, Doctor, Economist)
- _____
- Do not know

28. What type of career(s) are your friends thinking of going into? (Tick category(s) and state career(s))

₁ Vocational type (e.g. Plumber, Hairdresser, Secretary)

—

₂ Academic type (e.g. Lawyer, Doctor, Economist)

—

₃ Do not know

29. What do you see as being the **main** purpose of going to school?

₁ preparation for the world of work

₂ learn new things

₃ meeting people

₄ Other (specify) _____

30. Which one of the following do you see as being **most** important to you:

the chance to earn money

₂ the chance to work for a big company

₃ the chance to gain a qualification

₄ Other (specify) _____

31. Do you plan on going to University?

₁ Yes

₂ No

32. How much do you agree with the following statements?
 (show by placing a tick in the column which best describes your opinion)

	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Vocational subjects have a high status					
Academic subjects have a high status					
Vocational courses are difficult					
Academic courses are difficult					
Academic subjects are more important than Vocational subjects					
People with lots of GCSEs get the best jobs					
People who do GNVQ foundation level courses have a better chance of getting a job than those who do NVQs					
Britain's economy depends on people with high academic ability rather than technical skills					
People with high academic ability can easily adapt to technical tasks					
Bright kids get the best jobs					
If I do some academic subjects people will think that I am brainy					
If I chose to do a vocational course people would think that I am not brainy					

Thank you very much for having taken the time to complete this questionnaire.

John J. Swift

Antiguan College Questionnaire

Dear student,

Thank you for your participation in this study. In the event that you do not wish to continue, you may withdraw at any time. This questionnaire has been designed to find your views on Education and Training. Information will be used in an anonymous form and care will be taken to ensure that you cannot be identified.

Directions

Please answer all questions **ticking only one box unless otherwise stated**.

1. What age did you leave school

15

16

17

18

19

over 19

2. How many CXC's did you leave school with

less than 3

3-5

5-7

7-9

more than 9

3. Since leaving school have you studied for any other qualification(s) other than the one you are currently doing?

Yes

No

4. Please state type and level of qualification gained.

Subject	Award	Level	Subject	Award	Grade
e.g. IT	ORSA	1	e.g. Chemistry	CXC	F

5. Was this qualification related in any way to the present one being studied for?

Yes

No

6. How often have you been to the library in the last six months

Never

Occasionally

Once a month

More than once a month but not weekly

Once a week

Once a day

More than once a day but less than weekly

7. If yes, for what reason? (Tick all applicable)

To meet my friends

To borrow a book

To study

To work

To look up things

To get away from everyone else

To look up information about courses and careers

8. Do you have a part time job?

Yes

No

9. If so what?

10. Why did you want to get a job?

Money

Experience

Parental advice

Other (specify) _____

11. What major benefit did you receive from doing this job?

Money

Experience

Problem solving

Working with people

12. How many hours per week do you work?

0 – 5 hrs

5 – 10 hrs

10 -15 hrs

15 – 20 hrs

25 – 30 hrs

30 -40 hrs

over 40 hrs

13. Is the type of job related to what you are studying at college?

Yes

No

14. Have you ever worked before?

Yes

No

15. How well has school prepared you for the world of work?

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Please explain reason given _____

16. Why did you choose this course? _____

17. What do you like about college most?

18. What do you dislike about college most?

19. Would you encourage any of your friends to learn a trade/skill?

Yes

No

20. What do your friends think about your going to college?

good idea

A waste of time

Do not know

21. What do you think will enable you to get a good job quickly?

Academic qualifications

Technical/skill competency

22. What would you do if you were offered a well paying job which meant you had to quit this course in order to get the job?

Continue the course and forfeit the job

Quit the course and start the job

23. How much do you agree with the following statements?

(show by placing a tick in the column which best describes your opinion)

	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
Vocational subjects have a high status					
Academic subjects have a high status					
Vocational courses are difficult					
Academic courses are difficult					
Academic subjects are more important than Vocational subjects					
People with lots of CXC's get the best jobs					
People who do GNVQ foundation level courses have a better chance of getting a job than those who do NVQs					
Antigua's economy depends on people with high academic ability rather than technical skills					

	Strongly agree	agree	uncertain	disagree	Strongly disagree
People with high academic ability can easily adapt to technical tasks					
Bright kids get the best jobs					
If I do some academic subjects people will think that I am brainy					
If I chose to do a vocational course people would think that I am not brainy					

24. What is your date of Birth

/ /
day/ month / year

25. What is your Gender

Female

Male

26. What is your marital status

Single

Married

Divorced

Separated

Widowed

27. How would you describe your ethnic background

White

Pakistani

Black Caribbean

Bangladeshi

Black African

Chinese

Black Other

Asian Other

Indian

Mixed Race

Other (specify) _____

28. Do you have brothers or sisters?

₁ Yes

₂ No

29. If so how many?

30. Do you have children?

₁ Yes

₂ No

31. If so how many?

32. Is your father/stepfather/male foster parent employed?

₁ Yes

₂ No

₃ Retired

₄ Deceased

₅ Do not know

33. What is/was you father's/stepfather's/male foster parent's occupation? (e.g. cleaner, sales clerk, nurse, dentist etc.) _

34. Is your mother/stepmother/female foster parent employed?

₁ Yes

₂ No

₃ Retired

₄ Deceased

₅ Do not know

35. What is/was your mother's/stepmother's/female foster parent's occupation? (e.g. cleaner, sales clerk, nurse, dentist etc.)

36. With whom do you live

₁ Parents

₂ Self

₃ Spouse

₄ Friend

₅ Other (specify) _____

37.

Thank you very much for having taken the time to complete this questionnaire.

John J. Swift

UK College Questionnaire

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No

4. Please state type and level of qualification gained.

Subject	Award	Level/ Grade	Subject	Award	Level/ Grade
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No

6. How often have you been to the library in the last six months

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Experience

Parental advice

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14. Have you ever worked before?

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No

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Fair

Poor

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No

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good idea

A waste of time

Do not know

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People with lots of GCSEs get the best jobs					
People who do GNVQ foundation level courses have a better chance of getting a job than those who do NVQs					
Britain's economy depends on people with high academic ability rather than technical skills					

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Bright kids get the best jobs					
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Indian

Mixed Race

Other (specify) _____

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No

Retired

Deceased

Do not know

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Deceased

Do not know

35. What is/was your mother's/stepmother's/female carer's occupation? (e.g. cleaner, sales clerk, nurse, dentist etc.)

36. With whom do you live

Parents

Self

Spouse

Friend

Other (specify) _____

37.

Thank you very much for having taken the time to complete this questionnaire.

John J. Swift

Antiguan School Interview Schedule

Good morning/afternoon, as you are aware , the research which I am doing looks at what young people think about education/training and how it relates to work. Today, I would like to talk to you and find out what your views are.

This interview is voluntary, so, you do not have to answer any question that you do not want to. As with the questionnaire, any information you give will be treated confidentially so that you will not be able to be identified.

I will be recording the interview so as to save time in having to write down everything we say. Is that ok with you?

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? -- your background- where you are from –sorts of things done in your spare time
2. How would you describe your family? - upper , middle or working class
3. What sort of jobs do your parents do?
4. What is school like? – What sort of experience have you had? – do you get along with your teachers
5. Would you say you like or dislike school?
6. Subjects liked/disliked
7. Do you think that school has equipped you with the necessary skills they need for what you plan to do when you leave here?
8. What sorts of qualifications are done here? Are people just working towards CXC's? -
9. What are you planning on doing when you leave here? -- Why? -- Influences?
10. What do you think you would like/dislike about college
11. Do you see certain jobs as being for certain people? – gender – class race
12. Are there any types of jobs that you would not do? Why?
13. Do you think that it is important for this country to have skilled workers?
14. What type of skills? Why?
15. Have you been given any advice about work experience/jobs/careers?
16. What sort of advice? By whom?

17. What do you see yourself doing in the future?
18. What factors are most important to you when you are thinking about the type of job you would like to get?
19. What sorts of things could hamper you in achieving your goals?
20. What do you understanding these terms to mean?
 - a) 'Vocational'
 - b) 'Academic'
21. How much do you know about vocational careers? Where did you get this information?
22. How much have you been told about vocational careers at school?
23. How do you view vocational careers/jobs?

UK School Interview Schedule

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5. Would you say you like or dislike school?
6. Subjects liked/disliked
7. Do you think that school has equipped you with the necessary skills they need for what you plan to do when you leave here?
8. What sorts of qualifications are done here? Are people just working towards GCSEs? - Do you think that GCSEs and _____ should be combined?
9. What are you planning on doing when you leave here? -- Why? -- Influences?
10. What do you think you would like/dislike about college
11. Do you see certain jobs as being for certain people? – gender – class race
12. Are there any types of jobs that you would not do? Why?
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2. What school did you go to?
3. How many CXC's did you leave school with – how many were grades A-C?
4. What was school like? – What sort of experience have you had?
5. Would you say you liked or disliked school?
6. What made you choose to come to college?
7. Why are you doing this particular course?
8. Are any of your friends from school doing this course? – any at this college?
9. How do you compare your experience at college to the ones had at school?
10. Why didn't you go to do A' levels
11. What would you say you like/dislike about college?
12. What are you planning on doing when you leave here? Why?
13. What kinds of career/jobs are your friends going into?
14. Do you see certain jobs as being for certain people?
15. Are there any jobs that you would not do? Why?
16. Do you think that school has equipped you with the necessary skills needed for what you plan to do when you leave here?
17. Do you think that it is important for this country to have skilled workers?

18. What type of skills? Why?
19. Should there be a single diploma covering all qualifications?
20. Have you been given any advice about work experience/jobs/careers?
21. What sort of advice?
22. What do you see yourself doing in the future?
23. What factors are most important to you when you are thinking about the type of job you would like to get?
24. What sorts of things could hamper you in achieving your goals?
25. What do you understand the terms 'Vocational' and 'Academic' to mean?

UK College Interview Schedule

Good morning/afternoon, as you are aware , the research which I am doing looks at what young people think about education/training and how it relates to work. Today, I would like to talk to you and find out what your views are.

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23. What do you see yourself doing in the future?
24. What factors are most important to you when you are thinking about the type of job you would like to get?
25. What sorts of things could hamper you in achieving your goals?
26. What do you understand the terms 'Vocational' and 'Academic' to mean?
27. Why didn't you go to do A' levels

Sample Antiguan College Interview

Eng 2

- John: Ok Roo, can you tell me a little bit about yourself. your background, where you come from, the things you like...
- Roo: I'm originally from (OECS country). I came up here in – I think it is in 1992. I attended two schools while I am here; primary and secondary schools. When I first came up here I first attended the (name of school) where I was administrated in 4th grade. I like playing basket ball – I like playing practically all of the sports. I played golf in secondary school, football in primary school, cricket in secondary school, basketball in college last year – ahm I kind of like trying out new stuff. I like a challenge. I work part-time
- J you have brothers and sisters?
- R Yes I have ahm, - I have, let me see – I have ahm three sisters and three brothers.
- J Are they older or younger than you?
- R No I am the second of my mother.
- J How many of them are older than you?
- R Ahm , I have – only my biggest sister she is twenty two is older than me. I have a younger – all the others are younger
- J Mother and father together?
- R No!
- J So you came up in a single parent home?
- R Well practically you can say ahm, - I wouldn't really classify it as a single parent. Yeah, I would more classify it as a ahm – as the average life ahm – parenting of ahm people in the Caribbean. Well, ok, they are not actually together, right, but they take care of me and so forth.
- J They don't live together, do they?
- R No they don't live together now. Little rough times came about when I was in secondary school.
- J But you have contact with both of them?
- R Yeah, Yeah, I have contact with both of them. -- But the person I call my father is not really actually my father. My real father is in (OECS country) but, he took care of me while I was just a little baby, so I just grow up with him because he and my mother was together so ahm, so I still call him my father. Yeah, cause I do not associate myself with the

one at home, to the fact that how ahm, he didn't take care of me and so forth.

J So you're not really with your - what you'd call your....?

R Ok actually he is my step father and not my father but I call him daddy.

J Ahm, you said you went to primary school, what secondary school you went to?

R (Name of School).

J How many CXC's did you get?

R Ahm, I got ahm four. Is four? I took, I think it was nine. I took Chemistry, Biology, Physics, ahm, double award Agriculture, Building technology, Maths, English and Technical drawing. I came out with, ahm, Agriculture, Double Award

J Do you know the grades?

R I think it was a 3 no 2 for Agriculture, ahm , I came out with a 2 for Technical Drawing, a 2 for Building Technology, and ah I think it was Biology I got a 3 in. Yeah, I am supposed to take over Physics, Maths and English for next year. I am not taking over chemistry yet. I was planning on being a Lab Technician – you see look how life so funny nuh. My life was already planned out; not for the Engineering Department right, but for a different part, A' levels. I wanted to study ahm, anything like Biochemist or a Lab Technician. But I didn't get the subject Chemistry because we started so late in the term in secondary school to buckle up. So I got a 4 for it and I was supposed to take it over and take one year here in Engineering then get transferred to A' levels. But it so happens I life things just get so messed up it might as well me just go and work and done. Just get it over with and come look for the work. Yeah, so me just give that a rest; just take a different path for right now, which is electronics. Studying Electrical/Electronics up here.

J What sort of experience you had in school?

R Ahm, define that!

J How did you get along in school? How was school?

R Oh! OK! Basically I get along good right, but over the past secondary school, only basically they say that how they only have one problem with me. Actually I really won't consider it a problem. I will say my ahm, dress code. Because I am like this person right, I didn't really like my shirt in my pants regularly. Is not that how I do not abide by rules right, because rules is what governs society. Is just that sometimes right, ahm, due to my height the shirts are so – I don't really tell people this – the shirts are so short right, that how ahm, every time I sit down – right

now if I get up right now the back part of my shirt start coming out and to put it back in all the time I just don't bother and normally I would like dodge out one or two teachers and eventually I get caught they'd say "I tired speaking to you about putting your shirt into you pants and so"

J That is here or at school?

R I had that trouble in secondary school and no I am having it up here too. It's not really a bad thing you know, because I do have my shirt in my pants regularly, but sometimes it just slip out and stuff and.....

J Other than that, how you got along with your teachers at school?

R I got along pretty – At (name of school) I only had a problem with one teacher and that was my English teacher. She was like, like a pusher right. And I don't like people pushing me a lot. I drive myself. I don't really like people pushing me. You see she teach English and sometimes I would scud her classes to like go and do my science subject. You know like there is this man named Mr (surname), my chemistry teacher he would like keep us overtime and have us decide whether we should come to his – like all this time we were doing SBAs and sometimes she does tell us ahm we can't leave her class to go and do another subject and so forth – sometimes we still go and she will like be on my case and tell me stuff and always picking on me and so forth.

J but do you think it was right to leave somebody else's class to go to another person's class?

R No, I don't really think it was right but ahm, due to the circumstances ahm, I think I had no choice, because SBAs ahm, account for how much marks in CXC. So she as a teacher should actually understand. Even though we are a little behind in all our subjects and so forth. Couple of times I meet her on the road you know, and she always tell me she proud of me and she does tell me that how ahm, how she do it ahm because she saw the good in me and she know I will reach far. But sometime I just don't believe her. You don't know the thing - - some times I will go to her class and would like rush – like I would come out of a late, late class and go into her class and she like stand there and just look at me and she just go ahead and say (name) you have not adopted to our ways. That's the term that everybody always troubling with, even like a come to class – couple of my classmates right now if I am late they will like tell me you have not adopted to our ways up to now. Like a term they use. She use...

J The same thing you heard down in (name of school) you are now hearing here.

R Yeah! No they just troubling me. Meaning, ok me still not (laughs) – me still wouldn't really do what I suppose to do and so forth. (laughs). She just tell me I am like a bologna sandwich or something like that.

- J What did she mean by that?
- R I have no Idea. Every time think back on it I just laugh and stuff.
- J Would you say you liked school or you disliked school?
- R I love school
- J You liked school?
- R Yeah
- J What you liked about school?
- R Well, being around my classmates,,,
- J I am not talking about College I'm talking about school
- R No, school. School. Ok I liked school.
- J When you went to school you liked it?
- R Yeah I liked it a lot.
- J What you liked about it?
- R I liked the fact that how I was able to do certain subjects and so forth. I liked it also because ahm, I am the only child at home, cause my sister dropped out at All Saints Secondary School. My brother dropped out at (Name of School). Yeah, so I practically liked it because I used their – I don't want to use that word – that word sound – their – you know like when you mess-up or something – as a motivation. And I had some good friends at school. Friends that would do like, like – you know school is not just a place for learning it's a place for ahm, preparing you for the outside world. Ahm, I had friends that were – ok they were actually bad right but the same time you could actually see the – see what you're supposed to do from what you're not supposed to do, from just what they are doing. Like if we there – Like there was an incident at the school where they made a bomb from Drano Foamer and foil paper. Yeah, you know foil paper react with – I do it in Chemistry – They put it in a bottle and they shake it up and the expansion let off a big burst and it kind of rocked the school and stuff. And a --- I was there but ahm, I was in fifth form but my friends in forth form took me out of it; they got in trouble and so forth and and – it was good friends it wasn't so of them to just take me out and so – they took out another person too you hear, and they just took the rap and take two weeks off. Yeah so school was fun. School – got to do agriculture and go and do certain survey on animals and so forth; ahm plant crops and so forth with agriculture. And I like the chemistry part where I get to do certain experiments and using certain tools and so forth for the first time. Yeah.
- J What made you come to college?

- R I apply for college because ahm, actually the way how the ahm, everybody – CSME was introduced when? Three years ago right?
- J Yeah I think so.
- R Yeah, ahm , so everybody was talking bout how ahm, the world how the Caribbean is changing and so forth and you have to have a higher education because Antigua have the lowest level of education here and people from (Name of Country) secondary education is much higher than college and in order for us to survive we actually have to get a college education to actually manoeuvre in the other islands to get somewhere and so forth. Yeah so I just say I can just take two years – actually the idea was three years – one in Engineering and transfer to two in A’ levels but I just going to take the two years because things just rough now at home so just come and just...
- J When you say things get rough at home what do you mean?
- R Ahm, meaning financially. Cause Last year in first year at the ending my mother wasn’t working, my stepfather was in Barbuda and things were slow and I had to go to sea. I had to do a little fishing to ahm, to help out. Yeah I had this neighbour and they wanted somebody to help them on the boat and stuff. So I went and ahm, eventually I liked it.
- J It seems like you have a flair or you have some liking for animals and pets and that sort of thing
- R Yeah, yeah you can actually say that.
- J Because you talked a lot about your farming and the agricultural science.
- R Yeah! I have a liking for practically anything that is a challenge at first. Wanting to know how to do something. The first time I went to see right I vomit like the first three times and the other times – I fed the fishes man - and practically on the third week or so when I was going I was like a pro. I wasn’t vomiting; I was eating out there and stuff. At first I couldn’t eat. And now – every Friday now up here they give me every Friday off so I can go to sea. We go three days now. We have three range; one close to Barbuda, one close to north west of ahm not sisters ahm sandy island; and one round off five rock.
- J So you still fish in order to...
- R Yeah that is what pay my school fee, send me to college practically feed me and help out with bills at home and stuff.
- J So ahm, you said – you mentioned that you wanted to knock off your chemistry because you didn’t get your chemistry too high but you wanted to get that so that you could go into A’ level. You mentioned that

- R Yeah I was planning on doing that but now I not going to take it...
- J Yeah, but why didn't you?
- R Because ahm, at the first week of engineering I've never done ahm, electronics before, you see and I already had physics.
- J But don't you have to do Engineering Science, which includes Chemistry,
- R No! No! Engineering is basically ahm like labourers. Like the man that get up in the morning and fix drains, fix lights and so forth that's an engineer. Somebody that you can depend on.
- J So you don't do any engineering science now?
- R Its not an engineering science it's a ahm, its like a practice ...
- J No I meant as a subject?
- R As a subject no.
- J They don't do engineering science?
- R Noo!
- J You do Physics?
- R Yes we do physics, we do mechanical, we do Maths English, - no actually its technical communication now. And ah we do electrical and electronics. Yeah so there is no actual science in it except for Physics. And physics is not really science, physics is maths. Another level of maths.
- J Physics is not science?
- R Not to me. Its just another level of Maths ahm Physics is more the analysis of maths work, where ahm – physics you just – where chemistry you have to like – you have to like mix you have to like deal in – you have to deal with the properties always have to deal with some sort of properties. Like the property of this if it can burn with the property of that and elements and so forth. Physics now is like analysing, ahm like ahm in most every – in every area of – aspect of physics you have to do some sort of calculation. Like – even though you ahm, even though you find what kind of property this you have to find out ahm the surface area and so forth which is the perimeter – all of those stuff which involve maths.
- J So would you say that electronics is just another form of maths?

- R Well, electronics, electronics to me is just electronics. Yeah you can practically say that too. Electronics and Electrical, because they both have in ahm some part of physics to play – some part of physics in them. Yeah cause there are a lot of equation and so forth. Yes you can say that.
- J Why are you doing this particular course?
- R I had a – if you did ask me that question last term I would have given you a good answer but right now I am not even so certain
- J Tell me the answer that you would have given me last term.
- R I love it ahm, I want to fix things and stuff. When I was younger I used to like go to Pasture Pond – I live close to that area and I would like bring home old radios and stuff and look into them and plug them in and try and find out which part of them go bad and see if I can do something with them or something but...
- J You ever got any working?
- R Yes I got - actually when I went down there actually got them working actually I don't know why people throw away good stuff. So, yeah I used to love fixing stuff that's why – we had like five different choices; Refridgeration Construction, Automotive and Electrical and Electronics of and Mechanical. And I chose Electronics. And I chose it also because it is closely related to Physics also. Yeah and I Love Physics. I love sitting down and thinking how do you get from one part to another.
- J Are any of your friends from school at college?
- R Yeah, actually three of them are in my class right now, that's why like when I'm late and stuff they say I am not adop to their ways cause it's what miss (name) is always saying. But ahm, I think its three more who is in other departments that is from my school.
- J Did they have any influence on you doing that particular course you think?
- R Well I wouldn't really say no. Actually I normally make my own choices. I really single out what would beneficial to me in the near future and I take it from there.
- J Like when you were at school, did you talk with them like about who going where, who going to do what?
- R Yeah, Yeah ! Before we came up here right, all of us already we are all going to be in one class.
- J So they did have an influence on you?

- R No, No, No! is not like an influence right. Ok if is anybody had an influence I had an influence on them. Because actually they want to be around me. Ok as much as I want to be around them. So I already made up my mind a long time ago I want to do electronics. (student) also decided he wanted to do electronics and (another student) and (another) say she want to do electronics because ahm she want to go and be a – something to do with pilot – some kind of large word she used to do with
- J Avionics?
- R Yeah something like that. Yeah so all of us just decide electronics. There was this particular person who also decide electronics but he made a mistake on the paper – actually he made electronics his first choice and construction his second choice so they put him in his second choice.
- J Strange that you say all of you made that decision, because how did you know that you wanted to go in and do electronics? I thought you wanted to do A' levels?
- R A' levels? Yes! Because I already told them also that how ahm, I am going to take one year in Engineering – I spoke to Mr. (Surname) he was teaching Chemistry up here also. He was shift teacher – he teach us 5th Form Chemistry and in the afternoon he would come up here and teach A' Level Chemistry. So I asked him “Mr (surname) is it possible that how like I can take the – apply for Engineering for the first year and do the first year subjects and then get transferred to A' Levels when I do chemistry?” He say yes it's possible.
- J But why would you have wanted to go into engineering if you had had the subjects to go into A' Levels?
- R No I didn't have the subjects.
- J But how would you have known you didn't have the subjects when you were still going to school?
- R No because I already came up here and asked and they told me I have to at least have Chemistry or Biology.
- J Yeah, but you wouldn't have known what subjects you would have had till you'd have finished school aint it?
- R Yeah , no but the thing is while I was going to college.....
- J Did you leave straight from school and come to college?
- R Yes I leave straight from school and come to college.
- J So what I am saying to you is how would you have known that while you were in school what grade you would have gotten for chemistry?

- R Believe me sir, I worked so hard. Sometimes at nights right, ahm I was so good in chemistry that I would give lessons in the afternoon at school to my other classmates. And in the process I also understand the work much better.
- J Yeah I understand that but my question to you is, how would you have known while you were going to school that you were not going to pass chemistry?
- R No, I didn't – actually I believed that I was going to get somewhere like a grade 2 or something or one.
- J Yeah, so how – so if you had gotten chemistry....?
- R If I had gotten chemistry I wouldn't have been in this uniform right now.
- J So, that was my question. You said during school that you decided that you were going to go into electronics.
- R No, actually that's a mistake. It's after we ahm, - school finished I think in June and we had to – subjects came out somewhere around the next month and we had to apply up here for September. So after results already came out, I saw what subjects I passed and I called up here and asked them is it possible if I can get into to such and such a field. They said it is possible I can get into Engineering with such subjects; with Building technology and technical drawing. But if I wanted to do ahm, anything with lab work I would have to have some form of Chemistry.
- J So this is like a second fallback now because you didn't get in to A' level?
- R Yeah, but the fall back is not so bad you know. I mean it's not so bad. I didn't really – I like electronics but I really didn't know I would love it but boy the way how things are running right now – because , sometimes we in class – when I first applied for electronics right, the first thing that come to my mind – by the second year I would able to actually fix something. All they teaching us now is just theory, theory, theory. Just theory, theory, theory straight then we do a little practical with capacitors and resistors and so forth and look at different circuit boards and stuff.
- J So how would you say your experience is of college compared to school?
- R Ahm, college? To me ahm, college is much easier. Is much, much – I would rather spend ten years in college that to spend five years in Secondary school. Yeah, because up here the time for attendance is 8:30; sometimes it is so hard to get up. Actually not get up get out of the house for 7:30 to reach to school for eight o'clock. Here – up here also the work, the work is much easier and you have access to things

like computers and so forth. While in school if they give you a SBA that you have to type up, you have to go and – I don't have a computer I have to go by someone to get a computer or go to the library to get my work done and so forth, and I always falling back. But here I can just go up into the room and use any computer you want and so forth.

J You were talking about ahm, like how things are gong on. Are you happy with your progress here at college?

R I can do better. Ahm, I can do a whole lot better if I wasn't working but so far, I satisfy with myself.

J Ok you're satisfied with yourself, but what about the programme that you're doing, are you satisfied with that?

R To be honest I not really satisfied with the programme.

J Why?

R Because as I said ahm, at this point in my field I am supposed to like master some sort of ahm, fix stuff or something. I was supposed to – I expect to ahm us to like check out picture tube. If picture tube go bad how to figure out the problem source or how will we approach the problem or something but so far all we just doing is just theory and a little bit of practical and so forth.

J So you can't do any problem shooting and that sort of thing, and that's what you would've like to have done?

R Yeah, that it. But we taking some exams. Exam is in May and June. I took CAPE subjects – I paid for some CAPE subjects and I – we suppose to pay for City and Guilds next week. So, soon be over man.

J Are you looking forward to it being over?

R I looking for it to be over, because ahm, numerous amount of things; up here is getting real stressful now. Work keeping me – off and off at work straight. Yeah and my father not being there and stuff and how I have to take every Friday off from school to go to sea and that kind of drop me back way back and so forth. I t just, it just, call it quit and just go out there and just try and do something.

J Let me ask you a question. If you were supposed to be able to get a job right now that pays you good money would you would you just stop this and go?

R No! Some people believe they know me right, like my teachers. They made a statement yesterday. We were talking bout ahm, bout job placement for job practice. And I already made up my mind right, I want to go to APUA but he was calling out several others to me if I want to apply and I said no. and he start making fun of me and telling me that how ahm but they won't put me there because I am not ahm, -

What's the term for dress code now? I am not ahm , he use a term yesterday meaning that how I am not a person like that ahm - that I am a person that want to do what I feel like. And abide by my own rules. But they don't understand you know, I 'e worked, you know – when I start working here – I start working when I was in second form. The first work I did was ahm with a lady named (nickname). I was working in the garden. I was doing her garden work for her. Through (lady's nickname) I met Mr (S) where I do flower arrangement. That involve I have to always dress properly and so forth. I have to do several bouquets I have to do wreaths. I can do a wreath for the burying ground and so forth. I can do arrangements. I can do simple stuff like Valentines and so forth at Mr. (S).

Then from there I met Mr. (R) where I was a maintenance – I had to maintain an apartment; cut the yard; collect bills; do a little thing with pipes and so forth. Then from there I went to sea. So I do – all of those jobs that I have worked in when I stopped working right, ahm, two of those four persons came back at my yard asking me to come back.

J How come you didn't go back?

R Because I was just fed up and stuff. Like with Mr (R) now, sometimes like say I am cutting the yard right and equipments break down, I would like work from in the morning go right through lunch, just cut, cut, cut overwork the machine. The machine then would break down and then he would stop so long to fix them and then and then afterwards then the yard would get way. Then when he do fix them I would work them, work them, work them. Then they would stop work again and so forth. It's just the same thing repeating itself over and over. Then me say me can't put up with this, and plus the money was so

J Ah, but hear what I asked you, if you found a job that was paying you good money, big money, and you had a choice to take the job and give up college or continue college and forfeit the job which one would you take?

R I would forfeit the job honestly. The reason why, because I already reach so far and I am the only person in my family that reach so far. I have two younger brothers on my mother side and a sister and a brother on my father side and I have to be like a role model for them. And ahm - I can just go through. I can take like couple bang bout and so forth and just finish it and done. Is just like couple – even if the pay me like a million – no I not going to use such figures. Even if they pay me a substantial set of money I will not quit college when I am so far. I had a chance to quit college while I was going to sea you know. I was making like \$400.00 in a day. And that is just one time when I went and then I start making fish pot with them and setting along with them. And I was doing so good but after I was falling back the send me to the counsellor and I told the counsellor my problem and she told me I have to do such and such if – cause I told her I really want to graduate. Really want to graduate, because I can't go through so much and I don't get to graduate. And she tell me ahm, do such and such – see when – sometimes we go out at - when I finish from college we go out for three

o'clock; haul pot from bout say five o'clock go right down to eight o'clock /nine o'clock in the night and come in for fore day morning then be back up here again for college.

- J What you planning to do when you leave here?
- R To me I was planning to go to sea. That's – oh yeah that's why I was mentioning ahm, - that's why I want to go to APUA - they don't know APUA is my only choice because I want a job like – for like this- like I say, I can take out a day – just one day out of that week to go and do my own personal thing.
- J Fishing?
- R Yeah fishing. And Saturday and Sunday – is three range – we do go Saturdays and Sundays too. I don't want to go somewhere where either if I go somewhere right I would work hard and eventually the person would like me and it's a 59 per cent chance the person will want to keep me. I know that. I don't want to go somewhere where I have to go to work five days/six days a week and give up fishing. Honestly, as you see I love – I don't really want to give it up.
- J So if you go to APUA won't you have to work five or six days a week?
- R I want to like be in a place where I can like speak to them and they will give me like a one day leave or something. Even though they can't give it to me on - from Monday to Friday, I can like take it on a Saturday or Sunday. Anything like that. That's why I don't want to go any where else.
- J What kinds of jobs or careers are your friends thinking of going into?
- R My friends?
- J Yes.
- R I ask them a question; when they finish college if they certain they're going to get work. Cause I already know what I am going to do when I finish college. Ahm..
- J What are you going to do?
- R Fishing (laughs). I can just set more pots. But them right, - I ask them what are we doing up here – cause my first interest up here was to fix stuff, but now – some of them saying that how they don't know and that it's the paper that count – the paper do count right but if CSME come in right they have people from other countries who are already qualified; higher qualifications than our school can actually – look at something and troubleshoot it and so forth. I ask them if they certain they would get work? Some of them say that they not moving out of their mother house and ... They were making joke you know, but they don't know I was serious. Sometime I just wonder what they going to do?

Only one person – we have two policemen in our class, right. I know what they already are going to do. One person, a girl in our class, said she want to do – to work at some – deal with some part of plane or so forth, so maybe she can pursue that dream and the others I don't really know what they want to do.

J You have friends in A' level right?

R Yes I have Friends in A' levels.

J What are they going to do?

R Well, they actually take up my – some of them doing chemistry want to do lab technician and so forth. Some of them want to be ahm, physic – psychologist some of them doing psychology and so; some of them taking politics and so forth.

J So have you given up the idea of going that route totally?

R Yes, I am giving... - I would take over back – some day I may take over back chemistry, but I giving up on it totally because, I am already – I'm twenty right and I'm actually what you call a young man or so right and to me – well they say education have no age or something like that- you know you not too old to learn. yeah so, me just say let me be the man of the house; finish college and go and take care of some business and then if things get better, or when things get better me just pick up back on a certain path again. Cause I was surprised to see those old policemen up here. Serious.

J So that gives you some bit of scope for later on in life?

R Yeah, Yeah! You not too old...

J Do you see certain jobs as being for certain people?

R Yeah! Definitely! Yeah! You can't – people have different personalities, different backgrounds and so forth; things that motivate them. So, actually have different people. You can't really put a man a certain place where another man suppose to be. That's why I believe they have different locations for us in job practice not really – because APUA say they can take all of us. But they have different locations that they want to – like as what he said they know us – the teachers know us and know what we are capable of so they can put us a certain place where they feel we are suitable. So, definitely different jobs are for different people.

J What about like ahm, - If I was supposed to ask you which kind a class you come out of, if you come out of a working class family, middle class family or upper class family? What would you say you come out of?

- R I come out of a working class family. All of my people are known to have worked hard; cause my grandmother – I have a lot of relatives at home. Oh yeah, I forget to tell you, my real father did told me if I want to come to Canada. The had the thing at Multipurpose Centre – the Career Affair – I went and I applied for electronics for Canada and Technical Drawing for Jamaica, so if anything comes out of it I might take a chance at it. I told Mrs (C) I would take a chance, cause I have some money on my bank book. So I may take a chance ...
- J Is your father living in Canada?
- R Yes my father is in Canada.
- J And he is willing to bring you up?
- R Well, he wrote me and he ask me if I want to come up and so forth and spend some time but,
- J So even although you don't have much contact with him he still has an interest basically and is till showing some kind of an interest
- R Yeah, well they always say sometimes it too late. So, I've reached a point in my life where I actually don't have to depend on anyone. Not even, well I can't – I really can't say I can depend on my mother – but I hardly depend on her also.
- J So when I was asking you about certain jobs being for certain people, you think these different classes – within these different classes; the working class the middle class the upper class; children coming out of those families ; you think certain jobs are for them or.....
- R Well., Ok, it's like this, I believe the upper class people they are known to have contacts. But they are not really as good if you put them in – like say that how you are an upper class person and me just say “boy me know he mother have something and so forth and let me just put he in such and such a field or link he up with such and such a thing; ahm you knowing that how ahm that how your people is in a position you may not like the work as much as how – like a lower class person now who have to work for something yeah, who actually love something and so who will actually be more suitable for that job. Yeah so definitely jobs – well it can be both ways, jobs are – certain people deserve certain jobs and certain people the job just fluctuate.
- J You know you talked about these different people and so on, and jobs being for them when it comes to you are there any jobs you wouldn't do?
- R Well I'll practically take on anything, because – yeah I'll just practically take on anything. Anything that propose a challenge and I like when people tell me I cannot do something. You hear. I just make me just want to do it even more and more you hear. Some people didn't expect me to reach so far yeah. They don't know is when they tell me I

can't really do something. Right now I am in first division basketball, the highest level of basketball here in Antigua. When I first started out people were saying that I would never make it, and that was three years ago. I started out at third division the second year I went up at second and now I am in first.

J You know that with your idea that you would do anything per se but do you view jobs as being better than others?

R Yeah! You have some jobs that definitely better than others. Chemistry I was – Chemistry lab technician or a pharmacist is actually better than electronics or electrical.

J Why? What makes it better?

R Well those jobs require ahm, lot of subjects, and also dedication and a lot of work. Whereas for electronics now we only have to spend like two years. They have to spend three years and that's not where it ends you know. They still have to have to do another course somewhere I think in ahm in some other University or something.

J But would you agree that in electronics there are different levels also.

R Yeah there are different levels, yeah there are different levels of electronics but then again electronics break off into so many different areas right for those if you going up. Is not really called electronics we're breaking off into a like groups of electronics now, like my friend there who want to be a avio...

J Avionic technician

R Yeah, do avionics. Like you may want to – you may have another person who want to do something with telephones and you have to specify for televisions and stuff. Electronics just break off into so many different areas, but whereas in physician or something to do with chemistry like if you studying – come up here to do ahm lab technician you just going up as a lab technician.

J When you decided that you were not going to do or you couldn't do A' levels and you were going to do Engineering, what did your mother think?

R Well, my mother now. She don't – its like this right- you know like you have a child right, you don't really have to tell him anything you just can just leave him and just make him do, cause you directly know what kina of person he is? My mother don't really have – the only part my mother have to play in what I do right – that how I have to give her a better life.

J But I said how was she? Was she happy that you moved or was she disappointed that you didn't go into A' level or she didn't mind?

- R Well to me she didn't mind. Because actually she wanted me to go and work. Yeah she wanted me – she didn't say that but when comes to money and so forth she just say like when I first stop working at Mr. (R) yeah money and so forth that tight with her and so forth and she say might as well me go and me work and so forth.
- J Do you think it is important for this country to have skilled workers?
- R Yeah, definitely.
- J Why?
- R You have to have skilled workers because you have to people have to know what they are doing. You don't really want to take word of mouth. That is what college is all about ahm preparing us for out there. People not as skilled right. You don't really want to call Jack Tom and Harry and say somebody see Jack Tom can do something with wires and lights and so forth You have to have some sort of skill You want to show some kind of people that how you have a skill in that field or something
- J What kinds of skills you think are important...?
- R What Kind of Skills? Ahm To me
- J Important to boosting Antigua
- R To boosting Antigua. Well I believe every skill is important everybody have a role to play with their skill. It's like a basketball team Ok You may have a main man right? Ok Somebody that shoot a lot. But he alone can't carry the team right. Ok you have four more other man that have a role play, that have a skill, you hear, with those four other man you have to use them now or they will use you to either get somewhere or something. So it's like if you, is like you have a higher skill than me right but either can't do without the other ok. Yea it's like that. So so ahm so I believe that ahm every time I sort of scared
- J In terms of qualification, you know so many different qualifications, You think there should be like one qualification that covers all areas like A'Levels, Engineering
- R What you mean by one qualification.
- J Ok they do A levels, over there you do City and Guilds Another place call ahm do RSA or something like that. Do you think that there should be one body that just have one set of qualification for everybody like on a level playing field?
- R Well no! I don't really have a problem with how the college is situated you know with ahm qualifications. Because to me ahm, working-wise, here all of us don't work ahm work as as others. Some of us put out

way mor time than others. |Some of us don't even go home and look in a book whereas some others do right so I believe ahm....

- J So let's say that you are a person in engineering who is always beating the books. Do you think it is fair that they end up with a higher qualification than you? Or do they end up with a higher qualification than you?
- R Life is not fair. I've learned that from Mr. (W) right. So ahm to me If they end up with a higher qualification that don't really mean that they are better than you or anything just it's just a piece of paper but that now goes back to skill to skill work thing that I just talked about. If them end up with... to me it matter in a sense but at the same time it's just the way things are.
- J You say it matters in a sense How does it matter in a sense?
- R Yes ahm because I would't really take for instance me, I have to budget school and work right? At the same time right and while somebody else have just just just have to budget just school alone cause they are getting money from their parents so I don't really believe it would be fair at the ending I cannot graduate and they are graduating
- J ok
- R and I'm trying so hard, sometimes my head would just start hurting me and so forth. I trying so hard to have Mr (K) and Mr (W) just speaking to me. Cause sometimes if if every Friday I miss a class and I come in Monday and I go into the staff room and I say ahm Mr (K) I missed a class and so forth and I know you did this and did that he will want an excuse and he will just put me right on the spot cause he feel so uncomfortable to just explain one thing over and over and over to them right and so forth
- J So you have explained your situation to them and they have taken it on board or?
- R Well they did say they can't give special treatment to some student but ahm ahm I say I have have gotten some sort of special treatment I am still up here though
- J Have you been given any advice about like work, careers, different things
- R From?
- J School anywhere, in school
- R As in Secondary school?
- J yes

- R Well yes, I have given a lot of advice about work and career and stuff
- J Who gave you this advice
- R Ahm one time the same English teacher ahm she she had us talking like how you are with us talking now and what we should do and so forth what we will do after school and so forth and about the outside world and so forth and from my same team mates and so forth. Yea we ahm always like sit down after ball and talk and make little jokes and just seeing them at the position at the position that they had right all of my friends are much older than me yea and ahm
- J What do they think about you coming to college?
- R Well sometimes they will just tell me that how they are proud of me and how they happy and how me a one of the good man inside of Hatton and all of those stuff
- J So they encourage you?
- R yeah
- J So you don't get any negatives?
- R No, ok if any negatives is there is like, is like ahm when I like messed up or something they say boy is what you do but they don't really mean anything You know we like laugh along and so forth but there is not much negative I would say ahh the path I have taken actually everybody have influenced me in somewhat yeah mother team mates and so forth my friends. All of them have influenced me in somewhat
- J In term of talking about jobs and so on ahm you said you got some advice from school and so on. How does a person, a young person go about deciding what he wants to do in life
- R Ok I go about deciding on what I want to do in life right. Ahm just sometime I will like tell people I follow the wind but is not really true you know. I actually does plan stuff
- J How do you do this planning? How do you know about the different opportunities that you have out there?
- R Ok the different opportunities like say for instance the CSME is coming in. I know for sure I need some sort of qualification for is anything, in case, just in case anything happen
- J But what I mean is like one particular job for example you decided long ago that you wanted to do bio-chemistry. How you came about with Bio-chemistry
- R Yeah cause I love science.

- J yeah but how did you choose bio-chemistry?
- R Bio-chemistry
- J I mean you could have gone other ways, how did you just pick out bio-chemistry
- R Ok I took out bio-chemistry I don't I would say I just love science and there was this time in third form when a principal came into the classroom and ask all of us what we all want to do and that word just came I don't know where I got the word from. It was that and a lab technician I don't know where I got the word from
- J Would you say you got much advice in school about different jobs
- R Ahm not really. I would say from my friends from actually the jobs that they are doing. Oh yeah did I mention all of them went to college
- J All of your friends?
- R Oh yeah came up here Randy, Mr(W), his name here, a player name (nickname) He went to engineering he have a field in ahm in construction. Another Randy but he is a Harris. He has a field in refrigeration. Yeah Mr (W) she also came to college up here she attended I think is commercial. Ahm Ally he attended college up here I don't know what field he attended. He also went to Grammar school
- J And all of these are your friends?
- R All of us play together up to yesterday. Basketball on the dirt court.
- J What do you see yourself doing in the future, long term?
- R Long term. Well I won't stay on sea forever, so on long term, I 'm planning – ok depending on how things go like after college, I may just take two years down here and just go to Jamaica, honestly. I telling people that - I told my English teacher that I just taking – after college rest for two years, get work, gather a lot of money and just go way again. Just go and study something else again, honestly.
- J So you're planning on studying?
- R yeah Technical drawing or go to Canada
- J When you're thinking about you a job, what's the most important thing to you?
- R Job? I believe it is ahm the love for something. Cause to me that's the reason what people. Actually that's what a lot of persons lack. today in what they do and why they can't able to keep something or commit to something cause they don't love it. I actually love practically anything

what I do. I love to know I was at this point here and I move to this point.

- J So money doesn't play a part in it?
- R Money do play a part. I realise over the years...
- J But it is not the most important?
- R No, it's not the most important. I realise over the years right. After I've already mastered something money is the last factor that trouble me right. Cause if I willing to learn right, I am willing to learn I don't really care bout the paying. I might accept something if you give it to me. But if I've mastered it, honestly you hear, ahm I'll like feel that how I don't get the credit I deserve with paying wise and so forth.
- J What do you understand about the term Vocational?
- R meaning Vaccation?
- J Vocational
- R What I understand by the term vocational? ----- Vocational--
- J You don't know?
- R No, I don't know
- J What do you understand by the term academic?
- R Ok Academic mean ahm, mean the ability to do something. The ability to actually master and do something. Some sort of work, some sort of skill, some sort of field. Like you have an academic in electronics. You have an academic in such and such a...
- J So if I said a person did an academic career, or is in an academic career?
- R Well they are in some sort of field in some sort of – if their career is in ahm singinging, if their career is in electronics/ electrical – any kind of career.
- J You know, this thing about ahm, people doing technical jobs like electronics and plumbing and mechanics and so on, why do you think people look down on those people? Or do people look down on them?
- R I don't really believe so. Some people – no – yeah because- I don't really believe people look down on people who actually have a skill. Because, it's like this. You can't tell me if you have a \$1500 TV and something go wrong with it at home you will like – without that person in the country you would have to throw that away to buy another one

and you can pay like \$200 to go and fix it. Or something which is \$200/\$300 to go and fix it.

J You think people look on people who work like in a bank the same as they look on a person who does mechanic work?

R Yeah people do look – people believe- actually don't really look you know – they have this mentality right, that people in bank have a more higher position than a person who in engineering department like plumbing and so forth.

J Why, why do you think they have that belief?

R I believe as what I was saying. He used that word yesterday so much times on me. The dress code is what influence - I believe so a lot. The dress code is what influence the mind today of what a person do. Cause if you tell me a man dress up in long sleeve with tie and with shirt tucked into his pants with nice boots, sit down here and fix TV, he will have a more better ahm thinking of persons in a person's mind. Like ah if I see that man now, ahm that man there like he have some kind of a high position man. Just the way how he dress. You don't really have to know where he is going or something. Yeah, but normally you find a person that do electronics shirt – like them put on just a plain shirt and some kind of slippers or something but they gone an do their everyday life work or something. Somebody in a bank always have to be punctual and dress properly and so forth.

**Sample UK School Interview
Year 11**

- John: Ok Hanah can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- Hanah: Ahm I'm 16 and I've been coming to (Name of School) for the past 5 years. I'm in year 11 right now doing my GCSE's or I'm working towards my GCSE's which I will be doing this June. Ahm the GCSE's I took other than the ones that were compulsory I did drama, geography, IT which was a short course and ahm I can't remember the other one ahm I just can't much remember- nine subjects.
- John: Ok Can you tell me what sorts of things you do outside of school ahm- your interest.
- Hanah: Outside of school ahm I take part in theatre groups ahm mainly things like pantomimes and plays. I use to go to ballet lessons but I've stopped them now.
- John: Ok. Ahm your family- you got brothers or sisters?
- Hanah: I have one older sister she's about eight years older than me.
- John: Ok. That's- mum and dad still ahm.....
- Hanah: Yeah I live with both my parents.
- John: If I should ask you to describe your family, how would you describe them; upper-class, middle-class, working-class?
- Hanah: I'd say middle-class
- John: Middle-class?
- Hanah: Yeah!
- John: Why middle class?
- Hanah: Ahm, well, my dad's been working here ever since ahm he got married which was- he was about 25 and since then he moved to England he's been working really well. Ahm my mom's in full time- in full time working as well and so is my sister.
- John: What sorts of jobs do your parents do?
- Hanah: Ahm my dad's a bus driver and mom's a bilingual teacher at the ahm- schools just round Huddersfield.
- John: Ok. Ahm would you say you like school or you dislike school?
- Hanah: I like parts of school. Ahm generally I love- I mean I love my teachers, I love coming to school. Sometimes ahm the pupils might

make it a bit difficult but generally the main thing of school is coming here to learn and the lessons are good. I enjoy.....

- John: When you say that some people might make it a bit difficult?
- Hanah: I mean I'd expect that from anywhere really there obviously – I'm obviously going to meet some people that I don't get along with simply because ahm there's people so different to me. So sometimes it can be quite difficult but it's nothing I've done, nothing I'd let- you know get to me too much.
- John: Ok. Ahm you've been bullied?
- Hanah: I've never been bullied.
- John: What subjects do you like?
- Hanah: Drama and Graphics are my favourite subjects at the moment.
- John: Any you dislike?
- Hanah: Maths, just because I find it really, really difficult.
- John: What kinds of grades are you getting?
- Hanah: In maths I'm predicted about a C but I could get a B if I tried even harder, if I revise and if I really worked.
- John: And the others?
- Hanah: Ahm the others are generally ok. Ahm I'm averaging about a B. Some of them I'm getting an A, so then I'm doing quite well.
- John: Ahm do you think that school has equipped you with the necessary skills to do whatever you want to do when you leave here?
- Hanah: I think I've got enough ahm- to get me through to college where of course I'll pick up more skills and things.
- John: Ahm you said to college; you planning on going to college?
- Hanah: Yes, I'm definitely thinking about going to college and university further.
- John: Which college?
- Hanah: I'd like to get into (Name of College). I've also applied to (Name of College).
- John: Why (Name of College)?

- Hanah: Ahm I've just- I've always wanted to go to (Name of College) and I know it's a pretty good college. My sister went there as-also so that's influenced my decision as well.
- John: Ok, any other reason why (Name of College)?
- Hanah: The courses look very interesting. I know at the theatre studies; the facilities there are amazing.
- John: Ok. You said you've applied also to (Name of College); why also to (Name of College)?
- Hanah: Just in case ahm for some reason I don't get accepted into (Name of College) for whatever reason. I wouldn't like- I mean I would love to go to (Name of College). I wouldn't feel as though I'd fit in as well at (Name of College).
- John: You don't think you would fit in?
- Hanah: No, I don't think I would.
- John: Why?
- Hanah: Ahm just the reputation of the people who go there.
- John: What kind of reputation do the people that go there have?
- Hanah: There is a reputation of the people who go there. There is ahm is like they are not so interested in education and things whereas I love to study.
- John: Ok what sorts of things you think you would like at college?
- Hanah: Meeting new people and being treated differently like an adult and just extending my knowledge of what I already know.
- John: Ok what are some of the things you think you might dislike about college?
- Hanah: I might find some things stressful like ahm working to deadlines which will be much stricter than what we have got now.
- John: You say you're planning on going to college and university?
- Hanah: Yes!
- John: Ahm what's influenced you?
- Hanah: Well my sister did that as well she ahm- in fact she did a separate course after college and then she went to university so she's been in education for quite a long time.

- John: Ok. Ahm parents have any influence?
- Hanah: Ahm my parents are- are obviously encouraging me to go into the further education as well.
- John: Do your- your parents say like- make hints like when you go to university so so so?
- Hanah: Yes they do.
- John: So it's like expected that you will go to university or you must go to university.
- Hanah: It's not like ahm it's not like I must go to university but ahm they just want what's best for me and I know that going to university would benefit me a lot.
- John: Ok. You know there are different types of qualifications, ahm are they just mainly GCSE's that are done here?
- Hanah: Yes, as far as I know it's just all GCSE's.
- John: All GCSE's? Ahm and I don't know if you know that there's been talks about joining GCSE's and other qualifications together, Do you think that would be a good idea to try and.....?
- Hanah: Ahm not for this school, I wouldn't have thought. Ahm, because it could get a bit confusing and- but then on the other hand it could give people better views on what other courses are out there but I think the school is doing ok with just teaching GCSE's.
- John: Ok, ahm do you see certain jobs as being for certain people?
- Hanah: Yes, definitely.
- John: Can you expand upon that?
- Hanah: Ahm I'll use myself as an example. I really really can't see myself doing anything such as being a lawyer for example ahm I wouldn't find that kind of profession very interesting. I think if- if a person has an interest in a certain subject or a certain profession or a certain career then that's what they were ahm ahm- then that's what would obviously appeal to them, and that's what they would perform better in.
- John: Ok. Do you see like ahm certain jobs as being for certain classes of people?
- Hanah: To an extent. No- I mean I can't really see a millionaire being a farmer for example. Not- not for the fact that they wouldn't- they wouldn't farm in the first place but perhaps they wouldn't be educated in them kinds of skills . Ahm, things like working in accountancy

which might be passed on or which might have been influenced by fathers and mothers and grandparents and that sort of thing and it's expected of their children to so- go in accountancy if it's- if that- ahm if that was their profession. Ahm they would be specifically ahm sent to certain schools which perhaps the parents might choose which might have an effect on- which might be decided upon which class they are from.

John: Ok. Ahm like you mentioned the upper class ahm and you're talking about children from that or offsprings from millionaires and so on you wouldn't see them going into being like farmers or....

Hanah: Yes

John:would you see them doing things like hairdressing or...

Hanah: Well it- ahm everything depends on the persons themselves but- and bearing in mind that there will be a massive influence upon- a massive influence from the parents

John: Ok, you're talking about going from upper class to other jobs; what about going the- the other way? Would you see people from working class becoming lawyers, doctors that sort of thing?

Hanah: yeah I mean if they can work hard enough and if they are prepared to put in the work- then anyone can

John: Do you think there are any barriers that might stop them from not being able to achieve what they want to achieve?

Hanah: Well if there is a financial side to it all, perhaps they couldn't afford to keep up with tuition fees

John: Ahm isn't tuition fees ahm like free or isn't university free or- or you get at least a grant until when you can pay it back, if you can't pay it back you.....

Hanah: There's always that side of it. Perhaps you couldn't pay it back and that kind of thing.

John: And if you can't pay it back what.....

Hanah: Usually it gets- it drops after a while, doesn't it?

John: Do you think it's important for this country to have skilled workers?

Hanah: I think it is that way and the first thing that would come to my mind if we have skilled workers living in Britain and Ireland and that kind of thing then we can further educate other people in other countries that might ahm not be so privileged in having schools around.

John: Ok, what kinds of skills do you think are necessary?

- Hanah: Ahm I'd say the basic like ahm languages ahm maths and perhaps basic science.
- John: Ok. Why those particular subjects?
- Hanah: Just to have a better understanding of what's going on in the world especially now since there is so much- so many issues in the world concerning with science ahm global warming and that kind of thing.
- John: Ok. Ahm have you been given any sort of advice about work, careers that sort of thing?
- Hanah: Oh I have been given loads of advice at film school and ahm I attended a- well it was more of a practice for one of my career advice interview.
- John: Can you tell me about that?
- Hanah: It was some students from the University of Huddersfield that were ahm training to be- ahm I think it must be careers advisors or social workers. I think it was careers advisors and they literally needed ahm guinea pigs so they asked some people from my school to- to come along and just be tested once ahm just to do a trial- a trial interview.
- John: Ok ahm and was that- when you say trial interview, what do you mean?
- Hanah: Ahm it wasn't for anything, it was- it was mainly just based upon how well the careers advisors would work in a situation that would be quite real.
- John: So what they were doing, interviewing you for a career?
- Hanah: Yeah- it was all- the advice they gave us was genuine. It was- for us it was like a real interview but for them- they were being filmed so they would be marked on it.
- John: They were interviewing you or were they giving you advice for- for careers?
- Hanah: Oh they were interviewing us but giving us advice along the way.
- John: Ok. When you say interviewing you ahm can you explain?
- Hanah: Ahm, to me an interview is ahm asking questions and going into details about it just to get a good knowledge or a good idea of what the person's like.
- John: Ok so ahm have you been given any other advice other than that- you say you've been given loads- so that plus....?

- Hanah: Oh well yeah apart from careers as well so then you stay in education and that kind of thing, advice on social issues whether it's drugs or whether it's relationships and that kind of thing
- John: Ahm have you been to the careers advisors here at school?
- Hanah: We've all ahm been given a time to- to see the careers advisor in a group so we did some group work for a while. So no one in this school hasn't- in our year that is- hasn't met the careers advisor at least once.
- John: Ok ahm do you know what you want to do ahm as a career?
- Hanah: I would love to do directing ah directing films and theatre as well. Ahm I also have a fall back plan that if that doesn't work out I'd love to teach drama as well at school.
- John: Ok did the career advisor help you with that- ahm those choices?
- Hanah: Ahm she did- ahm she mentioned ahm seeing other people as well and they- oh I didn't actually get to see the other careers advisors around school cause I think we have more than one. I've only ever met one called Catherine. Ahm she was the one that ahm well she is the one that ahm what you call it...ahm she sort of insisted that I had a fall back plan.
- John: Ok ahm how did you decide that you wanted to go into.....
- Hanah: directing
- John: ...directing or even media
- Hanah: I've always been interested in films since I was a wee, wee little girl. Ahm I've grown up watching films and everything and I've always been more interested in how it was made and sort of the tricks of the camera and that kind of thing. Ahm as well as the actual film but I've always been more interested in violent scenes ahm I know couple people who are into the media as well. My sister's friend is a full time director in London and I shared my interest and she said that I could be a director when I'm older.
- John: Is your sister into Media?
- Hanah: No she's ahm she is into design- ahm she's into interior design.
- John: Ok, can you remember how long since you had this desire to go?
- Hanah: Ahm into.....
- John: Into directing?

- Hanah: Into directing? Yeah, I think it was when I was in Junior- year 6, when we did a project on what you want to be when you are older.
- John: Ok pretty long while and you – you’ve always wanted to be that- you haven’t changed?
- Hanah: I haven’t, and I am quite surprised.
- John: You said you have a fall-back plan?
- Hanah: Ahm teaching drama at school. That’s just because if – I also know that directors don’t aren’t always working, and I wouldn’t like to be idle in that time I would like to teach drama part time.
- John: Ok ahm with all the advice that you have been given, ahm suppose something goes wrong and you don’t- you don’t get to do directing – you don’t even get to do drama- what would you do?
- Hanah: Ahm I have had this discussion before with my sister and my parents and things. Ahm if anything goes wrong I can see myself taking another course to qualify myself in something else. Ahm other aspects of design really interest me things like fashion design, costume design ahm even make up as well.
- John: Is that part of that- you mention design and fashion- is that because of your sister?
- Hanah: No ahm in fact what my sister does, interior design it doesn’t really intrigue me- it looks quite dull, too mathematical for me.
- John: Ok Ahm what do your parents think about your ide- your ideas for a career?
- Hanah: I don’t actually think they take it that seriously. Ahm I keep saying how when I have direct my first film I’ll do this and that so to them they expect me to change my mind.
- John: Ok. Ahm have any of your parents been to college?
- Hanah: Ahm my dad use to attend college for a while but he dropped out and as far as I know my mom went to college but not university
- John: Ok I asked you already what you see yourself doing in the future and you said ahm into directing , media sort of, you have a fall-back plan- that’s to go back into teaching drama. Ahm I asked you if that didn’t work out what- what you would be in ahm you said that you would go into something else. What’s the something else- have you decided what that something else may be?
- Hanah: Other than designs as well....

- John: Oh you said designs- I forgot- yeah you said designs. Ahm what aspect of design ahm
- Hanah: Fashion design.
- John: Fashion design. Why fashion design?
- Hanah: It's just that it's really interesting. It's always changing as well. It's a chance for me to be creative if I ever have to go into it
- John: Ok. Now with all those things what factors are most important to you when you are thinking about the type of career you want to go into?
- Hanah: It really depends on you the person whether you are motivated.
- John: Yes but what factors are important to you?
- Hanah: To me?
- John: To you when you are deciding.
- Hanah: It's if I have an interest in it. It's if I will be willing to pull my weight and if I feel creative in it.
- John: What sorts of things you think would hamper you achieving the goals that you've set for yourself?
- Hanah: Well for one, not getting into (Name of College) would be a massive blow. Ahm, other things would- if something turns out that if something comes up that's unexpected I think that I'd have to be educated in this sort- in this sort of profession
- John: Do you need to have ahm A' levels to get into the- the media course that you want to do?
- Hanah: Well so far everyone that I know who has gone in to media have gone into college but I can't- I have heard of ahm more famous directors who have dro- who did drop out of college ahm.....
- John: If you didn't get the grades at the end of this ahm year, what would you do?
- Hanah: I wouldn't give up if you know what I mean. I wouldn't just go well that's the end of that. I would go out of my way to come around that; that means working voluntarily for a while or working my way up. Or if it means just going back into education and just try again.
- John: Would you- which one would you do? Would you opt to go like to (Name of College) and do
- Hanah: That would probably be my first choice- would be just to go back into education for the single fact that people- I know that people will judge

you, and you know think about you differently if you say that I have a degree or I have a diploma.

John: Ok. So ahm why you think they'll judge you differently?

Hanah: It's in a soci- we're living in a society where the majority of people who are respected and who have respectable jobs are educated and that's really important.

John: You mentioned respectable jobs; what a respectable jobs?

Hanah: For me it is something that you yourself can be proud of. I don't actually believe that if someone says that they are ahm if they are working voluntarily in a profession that they don't -like box making- that's just the best thing that comes to my head because they dropped out of college and they can't say it aloud then that to me isn't respectable.

John: Box making; when you say box making what do you mean?

Hanah: That's the first thing that came to my head. It's was just working something that's quit drab and quite dreary and they don't themselves like.

John: You mean like making cardboard boxes?

Hanah: Yeah!

John: Ok, right I just wanted to clarify what you meant by box making so that we are on the same wave length. Ahm would you say being a mechanic is a respectable job?

Hanah: Definitely. Ahm I myself am quite interested in mechanics and ahm technology and that kind of thing, metal work, ahm engineering.

John: Do you do any technology subjects here?

Hanah: I did graphics. Ahm I would have taken metal work and wood work only I wanted more of a balance in my edu- in my GCSE's so I took 1 technology, 1 language, 1 humanity and ahm and an art.

John: Ok when ahm- when you made those choices in year 9, were they geared towards what you wanted to do as a director or film maker?

Hanah: Ahm at the time- I can't actually remember exactly when I made the decision. As far as I can remember I have always wanted to do a balance and I knew that if I took a balance I'd have- I mean a balanced range of subjects then I would have more ahm I'd have a wider range of an option and if I did change my mind if I got -when I got to year 10 or 11 by that time I didn't realize what I did- I wasn't too sure if I would still be interested in directing but I have come so far and I have.

- John: Ok. Directing, Media these are jobs which are kinda difficult to get into; It's not everybody that becomes a director ahm suppose you couldn't get into that would you do something else?
- Hanah: Other than teaching, other than fashion designing?
- John: Yeah!
- Hanah: I would be looking into like- I would be looking back into other things like what can I do.....
- John: You mentioned you liked technology and that sort of thing; would you do a technology job?
- Hanah: Ahm graphics- I could do graphic design. Ahm I mean it's not that I wouldn't- I would not be a graphic designer it's just that I would prefer directing.
- John: Ok. Ahm you don't look down on people who do graphic design?
- Hanah: I would probably look up to them more than anything cause it's such an amazing subject.
- John: What about people who do things like ahm hairdressing and those types of things?
- Hanah: Hairdressing? Any skill that that person can do brilliantly I would I would look up to.
- John: You mentioned a job that ahm when I asked you about what's a desirable job you said something that the person doesn't have to hang his head in shame over- ahm what are the kinds of job you think you think people - that are not so respectable.
- Hanah: Would be- would be unhappy doing?
- John: Yeah!
- Hanah: Well it really depends. I mean someone could be working in a supermarket and just not liking it and to me I wouldn't see the point of it I would have to enjoy a career before I can say I am doing the career.
- John: So a person who becomes an accountant because their parent is an accountant?
- Hanah: I mean that could be an influence on them but in the end it's their decision. If they wanted to be an accountant and are an accountant then that worked out fine but if they didn't want to be an accountant and they are an accountant and perhaps they didn't like being an

accountant then perhaps that is when I would start to think well then you can do something else.

John: Do you see bus driving as a respectable job?

Hanah: Well my dad loves it and to him ahm if he's happy with it then I'm happy with it. It's really down to the person whether they- one can do it and if they want to do it as well.

John: You said your mother is a...?

Hanah: A bilingual teacher.

John: A bilingual teacher. Ahm does that teaching have anything to do with why you want to go into drama teaching?

Hanah: Probably not. My mum is- she's not like a full-time teacher. She wouldn't be in front of a classroom telling children what to do- she's more like an ahm assistant. She will do full time lessons ahm outside of classes.

John: So she's more like a support person.

Hanah: Yes but will arrange her own ahm lessons. It aimed directly at children who are Asians who would speak either hindu or Punjabi or urdu and that's when they start learning a bit more about their language. A bit more about their religion and ahm culture and that kind of thing.

John: Ok. Ahm what do you understand by the term vocational?

Hanah: Ah I've come across it isn't it – we were doing this in PHSE and I've completely forgotten.

John: You have done it here in PHSE?

Hanah: We have come across it but I have completely forgotten about it.

John: What do you understand by the term academic?

Hanah: Ahm first what I would link with academic would be education and those subjects- things like Maths, English, Science.

John: Ok, if I ask you what about pursuing an academic career?

Hanah: To me that's just as hard. Ahm I would say there would be a lot of maths involved, a lot of english involved and a lot of science involved. Not in- not in all of them maybe- maybe one requires more maths than the other.

John: So what would you call what what- what would be an example of an academic career?

- Hanah: Teaching, that would be one.
- John: Teaching?
- Hanah: Teaching maths; that sort of thing. Ahm probably being a lecturer at a college.
- John: Lecturer at a college; what you say a doctor is an academic career?
- Hanah: Well, perhaps yeah. I never thought of that one but yes I would say that one was academic.
- John: Why?
- Hanah: Again a lot of science involved Ahm and I would imagine that they would have had to go through a lot of education to be a doctor or to be a dentist.
- John: A nurse?
- Hanah: Ahm a nurse as well I didn't think of that one either.
- John: Mechanic?
- Hanah: Mechanic? Ah actually I reckon that would be quite an academic one as well cause there is loads of science involved in there, a lot of physics.
- John: Plumbing?
- Hanah: Yep, I'd say that was quite academic.
- John: Ahm has school talked to you a lot about different careers? Have they given you advice on how to get into different careers?
- Hanah: Well apart from the career advisor we have PHSE lessons and citizenship lessons where ahm we are just given the opportunity to- well, for the moment now it's a free lesson where we catch up on course work but before we learnt about other people – other - the Tuesdays lessons I remember this quite vividly is where we would talk about which skills would be needed for which kind of skills ahm which skills would be needed for which kind of jobs even.
- John: Ahm what kind of skills would be needed for what kind of jobs; can you give me a...?
- Hanah: The ones that we covered ahm I think one of the most- one of the main professions that – I know that boys tend to go for the B- in fact plumbing, ahm building, joinery; I know most of my friends are going into that . So ahm we discussed things like- it's it's ahm a good thing to have a balance ahm balanced GCSE and taking things like physics

is quite beneficial. I think chemistry as well, I can't remember it was quite a long time ago.

John: You say ahm you just mentioned some kinds of careers that boys would go into; do you think there are certain jobs that are suited for boys and certain jobs that are suited for girls?

Hanah: I think if I was talking about the most extreme jobs then yes. I mean it would be a bit wrong for a boy to be teaching girls ahm you know things like girls dance or something. I know that there are loads of boys who are brilliant dancers but I know that some girls would be quite uncomfortable with that. So we have to think about on the social side as well.

John: Do you see certain jobs are for women or what?

Hanah: Not any more. Ahm I'm not being sexist but I would say that women would have a much wider range- would have a bigger choice than perhaps boys would. Whether that means ahm that women want to further themselves into ahm more would be quite controversial. Careers that would you know fifty years ago would be associated with just men you know like the other day there was an article in the news that said there was more women in the army now which was quite unusual which would have been quite unusual a long time ago. Ahm and when it comes to boys I would say that there is a lot- there are few boundaries and this is looking at it quite blatantly that whether that- whether it means that the boys themselves wouldn't feel comfortable or whether it be the environment just wouldn't suit them.

John: You are Pakistani?

Hanah: No I'm an Indian

John: You are an Indian?

Hanah: Yeah!

John: Ok Ahm from your culture are there certain boundaries ahm like men shouldn't do these jobs or women shouldn't do these jobs?

Hanah: Ahm nothing comes to my head right now but it's just the way that- would an Asian man be doing that or would an Asian woman be doing that. It's very unlikely that an Asian woman would be doing anything like the army- would be going into the army ahm there is a lot of family issues involved with that. Ahm mainly involving things like the woman's safety. The way I have always known it ahm is that parents are always more protective of- I mean Asian parents are always more protective of their Asian daughters. I don't know what it is but I've just noticed it wherever I've gone so then with the Asian men I think there is more of an ego side to it all where they have to do something where they can prove themselves.

- John: Ahm, can you tell me a little bit more about that? I am interested in that.
- Hanah: So far I haven't met a single Asian guy who has said that they are a designer. I mean a fashion designer sorry – a fashion designer. That's just the first thing that comes to my head. That's a profession that's usually associated with either female or gay men. It's- I know it's not ahm it's not politically correct but stereotypically that is what is always associated- that's associated with fashion so when you have an Asian Guy – if ever you have an Asian guy working as a fashion designer it's not gonna look too likely. It's just the whole ego side to it and all that. Ahm I'm sure every boy has but it just seems even more particular in Asian boys.
- John: Ok. You mentioned the protectiveness of ahm Asian fathers over their daughters; Is there ahm jobs that your father wouldn't allow you to do ahm get into?
- Hanah: Ahm probably the more overt side of things and perhaps modelling and that kind of thing where it would be just inappropriate for me that my parents would think inappropriate.
- John: Don't they have Asian models?
- Hanah: They do have Asian models but in the sense of ahm what my family would think of me I really can't see my parents let me doing that kind of thing. I guess that with the Asian models that there must be a completely new side to it.
- John: Are there any other careers like that or any other careers that your parents wouldn't allow you to go into?
- Hanah: For me it would- I can't actually think of one right now, ahm but I'm sure there is a few.
- John: Would your parents allow you to become let's say like a hairdresser?
- Hanah: They probably would but they'd know more that I wouldn't and they wouldn't- I mean this is looking at me as a person I wouldn't do hairdressing. Ahm but if I were interested in hairdressing and if and if was the only skill I had- if it was one of the only skill I had or if it was something that I was really interested in then I am quite sure that my parents would let me do it.
- John: Didn't you mentioned something like ahm fashion designing ahm beautician or something like that?
- Hanah: Yes ahm...
- John: What's the difference- there is not much of a difference between hairdressing and.....?

- Hanah: Oh I know; that's why I said that if I really had an interest in hairdressing then my parents would let me go for it
- John: Ok. Ahm anything that you think might- ahm that your parents might say...no to?
- Hanah: They might ask me to reconsider and ask me to go for ahm perhaps a better paid job because generally speaking I know that hairdressers don't get paid as much as they would like to.
- John: Ok. I noted the types of jobs that you chose ahm are associated with kind of like- high pay?
- Hanah: What do you mean?
- John: Ahm film directing, fashion designing they are kinda like
- Hanah: Do you mean would my parents allow me.....
- John: No I said that I noticed that the jobs that you- you chose for yourself- that you would like to get into are ahm associated with high pay.
- Hanah: Yeah!
- John: Is it the status of it that drew you into it?
- Hanah: It's actually none of that. I wouldn't mind ahm being a director on a low budget simply because I just- I would love to direct a film just to be able to say that I'm a director.
- John: So money is not a big issue for you?
- Hanah: For me, no. Not at the moment.
- John: What about for your parents?
- Hanah: Ahm, for my parents, they would probably think of me and they would probably ask me to go for something that I can earn enough for me to live on by myself on
- John: Ok. When you speak to your friends about ahm like what- you know at times ahm at least I can remember when I was younger growing up they say "what you want to be" and you will tell them and you will say "so what you want to be". Do you have those kinds of conversation with your friends?
- Hanah: Ahm, not often, no. Cause I think we all know. We could all probably pinpoint exactly what everyone's wanted to be.
- John: Right and ahm what do they think about your choices?

- Hanah: Ahm they haven't really told me about what they think. They just ahm they just assume that that's what I'm gonna do.
- John: Are many of your friend going to (Name of College)?
- Hanah: Ahm not as many as I would like actually. Quite a lot of them are going to (Name of College) and I'm trying to persuade them to come to (Name of College) with me. Ahm but so far I've got two on my side.
- John: Why are they wanting to go to (Name of College)?
- Hanah: That's beyond me at the moment but they are saying - well the argument that's drawn them in is better teaching- better studying facilities and better courses.
- John: At (Name of College)?
- Hanah: At (Name of College) than (Name of College) which I disagree on.
- John: Ok. Ahm, do you have any friends that are going to (name of College)?
- Hanah: Ahm, yes. I've got quite a few friends going to (Name of College).
- John: What sort of things they are going to do?
- Hanah: Ahm most of them are going into joinery. One of them is quite interested in- I think it was accountancy.
- John: Ok. How come they are going to (Name of College) and you are going to (Name of College)? Why is that?
- Hanah: Ahm they wanted to go to (Name of College) because it just interested them more. Ahm I think there is also that side of ahm grade as well cause getting into (Name of College) is a lot easier than getting into (Name of College).
- John: Ok you said it's a lot easier. Why? For what?
- Hanah: The grades needed to get into (Name of College) compared to (Name of College)- you wouldn't believe it. I don't actually know the grades but I remember- I mean I can't remember the grades but I remember when they told me I thought this can't be right.
- John: What kinds of grades do you need to get into (Name of College)?
- Hanah: Ahm 5 A to C or 5 C's or above.
- John: 5 C's or above?
- Hanah: Umm.

John: Ok. Ahm how do you view their kind of woodworking careers compared to your kind of career?

Hanah: I would say that it's pretty- a lot interesting. I mean to me directing would be a lot more interesting but that wouldn't stop me from trying out what they were doing as well. Ahm if they have a massive interest in it, which I know they do, then to me that's probably better than me wanting to be a fashion designer which is my second choice.

John: You don't have any brothers?

Hanah: No, no brothers.

John: Ok. Your uncles and the rest of your other families, cause I know Asian families are close knit. What do they think about your?

Hanah: Ahm it's quite funny you should say that. My- most of my family are actually in India. My closest family is in India but ahm it's strange how the more distantly related ahm the more distant relations are living so close by. Ahm my cousins living in India, I haven't spoken to in a long, long time. We don't really talk about careers or anything but the ones ahm but the ones who are living near us are more distantly related- I think they know. I think they know that I am interested in directing and films and media and that kind of thing but right now they are more focused on my sister cause she is older and she is actually in a profession right now.

John: Ok! Are there any other things you would like to mention about like careers and your ideas of what you think about it. Do you think jobs are easy to get into?

Hanah: I know that they are not easy to get into. I know that ahm for example my sister when she wanted to get into interior design when she wanted a job she was looking for at least a good six months before she actually got a job. So I know that it's quite difficult and it's time consuming.

John: Do you think there are any kind of particular areas that government are pushing students towards?

Hanah: Well obviously government now ahm pushing students to do things like ahm further on education. They have made English Maths and Science compulsory but that's been there for ages. So, I think the government are wanting to tie more people in that kind of professional market.

School of Education and Professional Development
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11th April 2005

Inside address
removed
for
confidentiality

Dear

As previously discussed, I am a research student at the University of Huddersfield undertaking a study on the perceptions of young people in the North of England towards Vocational Education and Training. I am therefore seeking permission to invite 30 of your year 10 students and 30 of your year 11 students to complete a simple questionnaire as to their perceptions of Vocational Education and Training in September of this year. I anticipate that this would take approximately 40 minutes. Students can be assured that their responses would be treated as confidential and would be anonymous. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines would be adhered to and any student who did not wish to take part in this survey could withdraw.

In anticipation of a favourable response I would like thank you for your kind assistance.

Yours sincerely

John J. Swift
Research Student

Antiguan Interviews

Interview Code	Name	Born	Brothers	Sisters	Mothers job	Fathers job	Step-father	status
AG.4 th Frm. M.1	Rand	St. Vincent	2	3	Sales Clerk (sp)	Mason		Middle class
AG.4 th Frm. M. 2	Nice Guy	Guyana	0	1(half)	Nurse (sp)	-	Bf-unemployed	Middle class
AG.4 th Frm. F. 3	Tisha	Puerto Rico	1	5	Does not work	Fixes Air con/Ref	N/A	
AG.4 th Frm. F. 4	Te-Marie	St. Lucia	1	1 (+)	House keeper (nm)	Sub contractor(nm)	N/A	Middle class
AG.4 th Frm. F. 5	Shenelle	Dominica	0	1	Housewife (sp)	-	bartender	Working class
AG.5 th Frm. F. 6	Corn Flakes		2 (1+)	1 (+)	Preschool Teacher	Pastor	N/A	Middle to working class
AG.5 th Frm. F. 7	Domnique		1 (-)	1 (-)	Vendor (sp)	-	Aircraft Mechanic	Middle class
AG.5 th Frm. M. 8	Dimitry	Antigua	4 (1+)	0	Sales clerk (sp)	-	Air craft engineer	-
AG.5 th Frm. 9	Efa	Antigua	1 (+)	2 (1+)	House wife	Watch technician	N/A	
AG.5 th Frm. M. 10	Ghost	Antigua	1 (+)	3 (2+)	cleaner	driver	N/A	middleclass
AG.4 th Frm. F. 11	Shorty	Dominican Republic	1 (-)	3 (+)	Fast food	Plumber/ electrician	N/A	Middle class
AG.4 th Frm. M. 12	Francis	Antigua	1 (+)	2 (+)	housekeeping	Salesman	N/A	Working class

Appendix 5

AG.4 th Frm. F. 13	Meneka	Guyana	1 (-)	2 (1+)	Maid (sp)	-	-	
AG.4 th Frm. F. 14	Nemo		0	2 (+)	Sales clerk	Computer technician	N/A	
AG.4 th Frm. F. 15	Princess	Antigua	2 (-)	0	-	Electrical technician		Middle class
AG.5 th Frm. F 16	Kola		2	6 (1+)	Chef	Water sports	-	Working class
AG.5 th Frm. M. 17	Antonio	Antigua	1 (+)	1 (+)	Teacher	Taxi man	N/A	Middle class
AG.5 th Frm. F. 18	Casy	Guyana	2 (-)	4 (-)	Manager of restaurant	-	Owns restaurant	-
AG.5 th Frm. F. 19	Eight	St. Vincent	0	2 (-) (step+)	housewife	contractor		Working class
AG.5 th Frm. F. 20	Gemeni	Antigua	1 (+)	1 (+)	housewife	Purchases manager	N/A	Middle class
AG. ENG. M. 21	Scoobey	Guyana	1	2	-	-	-	Working class
AG. ENG. M. 22	Bob	Antigua	2 (+)	2 (1-)		Carpenter		Working class
AG. ENG. M. 23	Jay	Antigua	2 (+-)	0				
AG. ENG. M. 24	Michael	Toronto	0	0	(sp)			Working to Middle class
AG. ENG. M. 25	Roo	St. Vincent	3	3 (1+)	(sp)			Working class
AG. ENG. F. 26	Beverly	Antigua	2 (-)	4 (-)	Auditor	Retired Hospital Statistician	N/A	Middle class
AG. ENG.	Davis	Antigua	1 (-)	1 (-)	Accountant	-	Electronics	Working class

M. 27							Engineer	
AG. BUS. F. 28	Kimmy	Trinidad			Environment	Foreman		Working class
AG. BUS. F. 29	Sue	Antigua	1	2	Beach vendor	Teacher		Working class
AG. BUS. F. 30	Tee	Dominica	2 (-)	0				Working class
AG. BUS. F. 31	Geiss	Dominica	5 (+)	0	unemployed	construction		Working class
AG. BUS. F. 32	May	Jamaica	1(half)					Working/middle class
AG. BUS. M. 33	Steve	Antigua	3 4(half)	1 1(half)	Owens small business & is a seamstress	Mason	Laundry worker	
AG. BUS. M. 34	Amie	New York	3 (half)	3 (half)	Secretary	Electrician	Auto-body repairs	Middle class
AG. BUS. M. 35	Skill	Antigua	2 (+)	1 (+)			N/A	
AG. BUS. M. 36	Mr Smooth	Antigua	3 4 (half)	2 (half)	Airport security	Police officer	N/A	Working/middle class
AG. BUS. F. 37	Missie	Antigua	2	2	Studying	Social worker	N/A	

UK Interviews

Interview Code	Name	Born	Brothers	Sisters	Mothers job	Fathers job	Step-father	Step-mother	Status
UK. Yr. 11. F. 38	Jane		2 (+)	0	Part-time Medical Secretary	Technical Manager	N/A	N/A	Working/Middle Class
UK. Yr. 11. F. 39	Liz		1 (+)	0	Accountant	University Lecturer	N/A	N/A	Working/Middle Class
UK. Yr. 11. M. 40	Geoffrey		1 (+) 2 (half -)	0	Student Nurse	Works in a Special Needs School	N/A	Designer	Middle Class
UK. Yr. 10. M. 41	Jack		0	1 (+)	District Nurse	Works in a building company Office	N/A	N/A	Lower Middle Class
UK. Yr. 10. F. 42	Anne		0	0	Director of a clothes shop	Engineer	N/A	N/A	Working Class
UK. Yr. 11. F. 43	Minnie		1 (+)	0	Theatre & Costume Designer	Social Carer	N/A	N/A	Working/Middle Class
UK. Yr. 11. M. 44	Dave		1 (+)	0	Specialist Doctor	Commercial Artist	N?A	N/A	Middle Class
UK. Yr. 10. F. 45	Lucy		1 (+)	0	Sales Person	Heating Engineer	Sales Person	N/A	Does not Know
UK. Yr. 10. F. 46	Holly		0	1 (+)	Support Teacher	Van Driver	N/A	-	Middle Class
UK. Yr. 10. M.47	Richard		0	0	Freelance Market	Freelance Market	N/A	N/A	Middle Class

Appendix 5

UK. Yr. 10. M. 48	Stephen	Huddersfield			Researcher Social worker	Researcher Driving Instructor			Middle-Class
UK. Yr. 10. F. 49	Katie	Huddersfield			Carer/Cleaner	Builder			
UK. Yr. 10. F. 50	Jade	Huddersfield	0	2(+) 1(-)	Cleaner	Builder	N/A	N/A	Middle-Class
UK. Yr. 10. M. 51	Flash				Behaviour support worker(infant/ junior schools)	Post man (last year a graphic designer)			Working/Middle class
UK. Yr. 10. F. 52	Demon Child	London	3(half)	1 1(half)	Has no knowledge of	No contact	Has no knowledge of	-	Middle-Class
UK. Yr. 11. F. 53	Helen			2(+)	Houseswife	Works at a metal dying plant			Middle-Class
UK. Yr. 11. M. 54	Jimmy	Huddersfield	1(step)	2(-)	unemployed	Works at a cement factory			
UK. Yr. 11. F. 55	Raji	Dalton			Care assistant (Hopital)	Never seen			Working/Middle- Class
UK. Yr. 11. F. 56	Hanah		0	1(+)	Bilingual teacher	Bus driver	N/A	N/A	Middle-Class
UK. Yr. 11. M. 57	Scott	Huddersfield	1 1(step)	0	Teacher assistant	Market trader	N/A	N/A	Middle-Class
UK. BUS. F.	Kay		1(+)		Factory worker	Factory worker			Working-Class

Appendix 5

58 UK. BUS. M.	Paul		0	2(+) 1(-)	University Professor	Stock Broker			Middle/Upper Class
59 UK. BUS. M.	Mark	Chesterfield	1(-)	2(-)	Shop worker	Cloth Maker			Middle Class
60 UK. BUS. M.	Bob		0	3(+) 1(-)	Housewife	On sicknote	N/A	N/A	
61 UK. BUS. M.	Champ		1(-)	1(+)	Housewife	Taxi driver	N/A	N/A	
62 UK. IT. M. 63	Alex	Russia		1(-)	English student	Electrical student	N/A	N/A	-
UK. IT. M. 64	David	Bradford	2(+)	1(+)	Dinner Lady	Runs own business	N/A	N/A	Middle-Class
UK. IT. M. 65	Jason		3(+) 2(-)	1(+)	Housewife (Unable to work because of hand)	Electrical Student at college			Second-class
UK. IT. M. 66	Super		0	1(+)	Retired Manager (Nestle)	Retired Builder	N/A	N/A	Middle/working Class
UK. IT. F. 67	Missy	Halifax	0	0	Runs family delicatessen	Runs family delicatessen	N/A	N/A	Middle/Working Class
UK. IT. M. 68	Douglas	Halifax	1(+)	0	Helps disabled people at college	Works with metal – builds gates and stuff	N/A	N/A	Working/Middle Class

Appendix 5

UK. BUS. F. 69	Higgins		1(-)		Owns Hairdressing business	Deceased	Owns business (furniture & stationery)	N/A	Middle-Class
UK. BUS. M. 70	Hubert	Huddersfield	1(+) 1(-)	0	Cleaner	Butcher	N/A	N/A	Working-Class
UK. BUS. M. 71	Fred		0	1(-)	Works in finance with Kirklees	Financial Director	N/A	N/A	Middle-Class
UK. BUS. F. 72	Marge (Mature Student)	Cheshire			Un employed (nearly 60)	Quality assurance manager (chemical company)	N/A	N/A	Middle-Class
UK. BUS. F. 73	Lisa Simpson		0	1(-) 1(+) 2(+step)	Junior school Teacher (Disabled Childern)	Unemployed (sick textile worker)	Works at a mental institution	N/A	Working/Middle- Class
UK. BUS. M. 74	Buggs		1(-)	1(-)	Secretary at family Garage	Mechanic (owns garage)	N/A	N/A	Working-Class
UK. BUS. M. 75	Mr. Anderson	Huddersfield	0	2	Care Officer	Works with the police	N/A	N/A	Working-Class
UK. BUS. F.	Shekira		1(+)	3(+) 2(-)	Housewife	Looks after Islamic	N/A	N/A	

Appendix 5

76 UK. BUS. M. 77	Javed		1(-)	1(-)	Works for family business	College Runs a number of stores (family)	N/A	N/A	
UK. BUS. M. 78	Bart	Leeds	2(+)	1(-) 1(+)	unemployed	Used to run a take away (?)			
UK. CAT. M. 79	Twenty three		2 (half)	1(half)	?	Builds compost toilets		N/A	Lower-Class
UK. CAT. M. 80	Taz		0	1	housewife	Owns a joinery company	N/A	N/A	Middle-Class
UK. CAT. M. 81	Joseph	Holmfirth	1(+)	1(+)	Works in family business	Own forestry business	N/A	N/A	Upper-Class
UK. CAT. F. 82	Tweety Pie		1(+) 1(-)	1(-)	Disabled	Wife's Carer	N/A	N/A	
UK. CAT. M. 83	Hot Sauce	Huddersfield	4(-)	0	Chef	(Chef) now works in a warehouse	N/A	N/A	Upper-Class
UK. CAT. M. 84	K-dog	Halifax	2(+)	0	Press Operative	Gardener	N/A	N/A	Working -Class