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**Is Career Advice in New Zealand  
Secondary Schools Working?  
Five Career Advisers Tell Their Stories.**

**Sally-Jane Smith**

**2001**

# **Is Career Advice in New Zealand Secondary Schools Working? Five Career Advisors Tell Their Stories.**

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Sally-Jane Smith

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## **Abstract**

This thesis describes the ways in which some career advisors perceive and experience working in secondary schools in New Zealand in 2001. Secondary schools are being increasingly seen as the initial stepping stone in which students develop the capacity to foster realistic and productive career pathways. Career development is perceived as a social and personal process, which ultimately should prepare the students to manage career transactions throughout their life.

My interest lies in the personal viewpoint of the career advisors. The focus of this research is on the unique way in which he/she perceives the world they work in. A qualitative research method was chosen in an effort to understand situations in what Patton (1985) describes as situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context, and case studies were used to collect and analyse data.

From the group of five career advisors, whom I interviewed, a 'snapshot' that represents each person's different experiences of providing career advice was developed. By connecting the pieces of each person's story this research investigates the realities of working as a career adviser in New Zealand secondary schools.

The first chapter explores through the literature review different aspects of past research in relation to career information and guidance. Chapter two outlines the methodology of the research including the evolution of the project. Case studies



and photographs were important components in this process. The third chapter describes the history of the project and the processes that were worked through to gather information and analyse the data.

In chapter four the findings are analysed in five categories. Each of the five career advisors is introduced and gives an overview of a typical day. This is followed by four categories, which describe different aspects of the experience of providing career advice for these five people.

This information is interpreted in chapter five. The key conclusions are that there is no formal policy or planning that is used by any of the five schools and that provision for information and guidance from year 9 is often minimal. The focus in all five schools was year 13 students and students who were thought to be “at risk” of having no post secondary school plan to follow. Limitations of the research include the small number of participants, and the time of year the research was conducted. Recommendations for future lines of research include the school management teams, year 9,10 and 11 students and the use of Career Services in secondary schools.

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# Is career advice in New Zealand Secondary Schools working? Five career advisors tell their stories.

	page
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
<b>Abstract</b>	i
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	iv
<b>Chapter One: Review of the Literature</b>	
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Secondary Schools and the New Zealand Government Career Information and Guidance Policy	6
1.3 Career Services, <i>rapuara</i>	11
1.4 From the students point of view	14
1.5 Students and the world of work	17
1.6 Learning theory and career development in education	19
1.7 The role of career advisors in secondary schools	23
1.8 Career counselling in secondary schools	24
1.9 New Directions	26
1.10 Conclusion	27
<b>Chapter Two: Methodology</b>	
2.1 The evolution of the project	30
2.2 Traditions of qualitative research	30
2.3 Comparison of qualitative and quantitative methodology	36
2.4 Qualitative research and case studies	39
2.5 Qualitative research and the use of photographs	40
2.6 Conclusion	45
<b>Chapter Three: Implementation</b>	
3.1 The history of the project	46
3.1.1 Prior research project	46
3.1.2 The current project	47
3.1.3 Plan of approach	47
3.2 Approaching the career advisors	48
3.3 The schools	49
3.4 Phases of the interviews	50
3.5 The use of photographs	52
3.6 Background data collection	54
3.7 The interview questions	55
3.8 Data collection	56
3.9 Data analysis	58

## **Chapter Four:           Presentation of the data**

4.1	Framework of the categories	62
4.2	A typical day	64
4.2.1	Mr Kairn	64
4.2.2	Beverly	66
4.2.3	Isabel	69
4.2.4	Anton Bott	71
4.2.5	Claire	73
4.3	National Administration Guidelines	75
4.4	Career Services	79
4.5	Career advice in schools	81
4.6	Professional development and training	83
4.7	Summing up	86

## **Chapter Five:           Interpretation of the Data**

5.1	The role of the career advisor	88
5.2	Decision making and career advice in secondary schools	91
5.3	Career advice in secondary schools and the issue of time	94
5.4	Career advice provision in secondary schools	98
5.5	Conclusion of the interpretation of the data	100

## **Chapter Six:           Conclusions**

6.1	Summary of the findings and interpretation	103
6.2	Limitations of the research	107
6.3	Recommendations for future research	108
6.4	Recommendations for career advisors	109
6.5	Conclusion	111

<b>Bibliography</b>	113
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## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Information sheet	120
Appendix B - Consent form for the school principal	122
Appendix C - Consent form for the career advisor	123
Appendix D - Letter to the principal	124
Appendix E - Letter to the career advisor	125
Appendix F - Thank-you letter after first interview	126
Appendix G - Thank-you letter after final interview	127

# **Is career advice in New Zealand Secondary Schools working? Five career advisors tell their stories.**

## **Chapter One:                      Review of the literature**

### **1.1      Introduction**

My choice of research topic was influenced by previous studies on how secondary school students decide on their future career paths (Carpenter, 1997; McIntyre, 1998). In New Zealand and internationally there is a large body of research that investigates secondary school students' perceptions of careers provision within the school and the greater community. This thesis, in contrast, is concerned with the people who provide careers information and guidance within New Zealand secondary schools.

The rapid changes that are taking place in the world of work are producing growing recognition of the need for lifelong learning. Secondary schools are being increasingly seen as the initial stepping stone in which students develop the skills to create a pathway for their future of lifelong learning. Career advisors with the support of the school are now seen (Ministry of Education, 1996, 1997, 1998) as taking a major role in guiding students as they chart their options for the future.

Careers education and guidance is receiving significant public policy attention today in many countries including New Zealand. One of the main topics of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) Education Ministerial Meeting in April 2001, was how to best enable citizens to take

advantage of lifelong learning opportunities in order to continually update their knowledge, skills and competencies (OECD online, 2001). This attention offers new opportunities and also new threats for career advice in secondary schools. There is a danger that development will be narrowly economically policy-focused, and will lose touch with the actual practice of supporting students as they decide on their future career paths.

In order to understand the provision of careers advice and guidance in secondary schools it is important to understand the wider context of what it means to be a career advisor in New Zealand in the late 1990's and early 2000's. Career guidance does not occur in isolation from the economic, social and political contexts in which it is located (Herr, 1996). It is generally recognised (Herr, 1996) that this role within secondary schools is complex, and often poorly defined.

For the purpose of this study I have differentiated between career education, career guidance, and career counselling. With the many changes that are taking place in the structure of work and the concept of career there is a growing case for adopting the singular usage "career education and guidance".

*The individual has a single career, representing his or her development in learning and in work, hence the general usage of the term careers education and guidance (Watts et al, 1996, p xii).*

In this thesis I have used the following definitions, based on those agreed to by the Ministry of Education, (1995):

*Career Education is concerned with planned programmes of learning which are concerned with the development of skills, attitudes and understanding to assist students to make informed post-school options* (National AEC Working Party on Career Education, 1992).

*Career Guidance is a programme, which helps students move from a general understanding to a specific understanding of realistic opinion* (Byrne and Beavers, 1991, p 34).

*Career Counselling is for people who are unable to make realistic post-compulsory career decisions. This includes the conveyance of expert knowledge about work opportunities and general essential knowledge about life skills so realistic career decisions are made* (Byrne and Beavers, 1991, p 34).

Current New Zealand research in this area has been almost without exception funded by the Ministry of Education (1995, 1997, 1998) and is concerned with reviewing career information and guidance effectiveness and the role of Government in their provision. This is not surprising when public funding is a consideration and the value of career services stems from its value to society and the economy. Research that concerns career development is closely linked with the changing world of work (Smith, 1999). Internationally this is also the case. Many argue that the concept of career needs to be reconstructed to include an

individual's development in learning and work through life (Collin and Watts, 1996).

This discussion will begin by reviewing the literature that has been prepared for the Ministry of Education concerning careers information and guidance in New Zealand secondary schools since the mid 1990's to 2001. Career Services is seen as the main provider of career information and guidance in New Zealand by the Ministry of Education (1998), and aspects of their services will be considered in relation to secondary schools. I will then discuss the findings of the research from the secondary school students' perspective, followed by a consideration of learning theory and career development in education. It is important to acknowledge that research undertaken elsewhere reflects not only different cultural and socioeconomic contexts but also different systems of careers guidance and information provision. Finally, I will review recent research that is directly concerned with careers advice in New Zealand schools from the career advisors' perspective.

## **1.2 Secondary Schools, and the New Zealand Government. Career Information and Guidance Policy**

The "Tomorrow Schools" reform of 1989, was a major turning point in New Zealand's education system (Gordon, 1996). The concept of a seamless education system with an emergent New Right focus on individuals taking charge of their own learning pathways drew attention to the responsibility of schools to provide adequate career information and guidance learning systems for senior students (McIntyre, 1998).



The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) was established in 1990 to organise and maintain the National Qualifications Framework (Tuck 1994). Secondary schools, polytechnics and private providers offer unit standards. NZQA monitors and records students' progress as they gain units from different providers. Each unit is then credited to their individual portfolios of learning. This new emphasis on lifelong learning shows a major shift (Inkson and Elkin, 1995) in the understanding of a career in today's society, which traditionally was seen as a single structured pathway based on gaining qualifications followed by employment.

*A career was perceived as a source of on-going self-development, increasing status, and security, and if the individual remained loyal to the organisation they were rewarded with the continuance of employment* (Elkin and Sutton, 1999, p 5).

It was perceived that there was a weakness in the education system in preparing individuals to be self-steering and pro-active in deciding on post-compulsory school destinations. The report of the *Career Information and Guidance Review Panel* in June 1995 set the scene for the careers advice that is found in secondary schools today. A central theme in the report was the need for increased flexibility and increased levels of skills.

In July 1996 the Career Information and Guidance Policy (1995) was introduced to clarify and formalise the responsibility of schools to provide appropriate career information and guidance. The Ministry of Education conducted a baseline study

in November 1996 (Wilson and Houghton, 1997), to research how well these policies were adopted by New Zealand schools. The main finding indicated that career advisors felt that their ability to meet the needs of their students was affected by the lack of time they had to perform their duties. The additional career information and guidance funding had on the whole been spent on computer hardware and software rather than human resources.

Career advisor comments contrasted strongly with the opinions conveyed by the school administration. For example, the 1997 career information and guidance funding to a small rural school, with 200 Year 9 to Year 13 students, was \$3000.00: a significant amount to purchase a new computer but providing only two hours release time per week for a career advisor (Wilson and Houghton, 1997). A computer, which could benefit all students in the school, was often seen as a more profitable investment by the school administration compared to the number of students who could benefit from two hours per week contact time with a career advisor. This did not necessarily benefit the career advisor in their role but was seen by school administration to benefit the school as a whole.

*The career and guidance review panel (June 1995) noted that schools have a crucial role in assisting young people to make appropriate education, training and career choices. In recognition of this, I have decided to specify an additional National Administration Guideline... Designed to clarify the responsibility of schools to provide appropriate career information and guidance for their students, particularly students at risk of becoming unemployed (Creech, 1996).*

This letter signaled future funding by the Minister and the publication of *Career Information and Guidance in New Zealand Schools*, a "document of good practice in career information and guidance" (Ministry of Education, 1997, p 18). The document positions the New Zealand economy in the international arena, having to be highly adaptable, with the ability to respond quickly to changes in technology and the economic environment (Ministry of Education, 1997). The importance of career information is linked to the above ideals through the importance of making the "fullest use of workers skills" and in establishing an environment that "encourages ongoing education and self-development". It was developed for co-ordinators, teachers and other school staff responsible for career information and guidance.

The common career statement issued to secondary schools in the form of The National Administration Guideline 1 (iv) (NAG 1 iv) states that schools have a responsibility to:

*Provide appropriate career information and guidance for all students in year 7 and above, with particular emphasis on specific career guidance for those students who have been identified by the school as being at risk of leaving school unprepared for the transition to the workplace or further education/training (Ministry of Education, 1997).*

The quality of career information and guidance in 100 schools reported on by the Education Review Board (ERO), compiled between May 1998 and August 1999, was found to be good or satisfactory in four out of five of the schools. However

less than half of these schools reported on were providing careers information and guidance at all levels within the school. Only 31% of reports noted that the school targeted students at risk of unemployment as specified by the NAG (Speers, 2000).

The schools that are successful in this report provide a progressive, ongoing programme at every level in the school (ERO, 1998). A coherent framework, which has clear objectives, forms the basis of a sequential development of skills (ERO, 2000). ERO in their report concerning a successful school made the following comments on what they considered constituted good practice in the provision of career information and guidance.

*The career information and guidance programme is well managed. Students receive a progressive, on-going programme at every level of their secondary education. The thrust to expose them to the widest range of career options reflects a sound understanding of Government focus* (ERO, 2000, p 23).

The main weaknesses in the 100 schools reported on was the lack of policy, planning and procedure followed by a lack in the delivery of careers guidance and information at all year levels (Speers 2000). Many of the schools that did not offer provision at all year levels felt that students were too young to benefit from careers guidance and information in years 9, 10, and 11 (Sutton, 1997; McIntyre, 1998).

The NAG 1 (iv) is the common statement for career information and guidance in all secondary schools. There is not a prescribed curriculum statement for NAG 1 (iv), and so fulfilling the guideline is the responsibility of each individual school. The Board of Trustees, Principal and the relevant staff develop their own policy, planning and procedures in each secondary school. This has resulted in many different levels of provision for career information and guidance in New Zealand secondary schools depending on their different management systems.

### **1.3 Career Services**

Career Services, which operated under the trade name of QUEST Rapuara until July of 1993 (McIntyre, 1998), is seen by the Ministry of Education as the leading provider and promoter of career information, advice and guidance in New Zealand (McKelvey, 2000). Career Services conducts career-planning activities in both the private and public sector, which includes New Zealand secondary schools. Commercial career information and guidance products offered to secondary schools include workbooks, *KiwiCareers* CD-Rom, *Jobs Galore* and *Courses Galore* reference books, and fee-for-service packages for training staff. Career information and guidance delivered through direct Government purchase agreements to secondary schools includes programmes for Maori parents with students at low decile schools, and programmes for Maori and Pacific students to attend information seminars. The 0800 information phone line and *KiwiCareers* Website are also funded by the Government for the New Zealand community (Careers Service annual report, 2000).

ACNielsen in 1999 were contracted to undertake research into outcomes from career intervention undertaken by Career Services to establish a basis for Career Services' belief that career planning does make a difference (ACNielsen, 1999). The key findings of the research illustrated that career planning has a much larger role to play than just helping people into work.

*The research highlighted that career planning does play a key role in clients actually moving into employment or education relevant to career goals. 80% of clients considered they had made positive changes in relation to work following career planning (Career Services, 1999, p 4).*

Career Services has a range of services, generally targeted at people who are pursuing career goals. Figures indicate that most users visit between 9am and 3pm, suggesting strong use by schools. *CareerPoint*, Career Services 0800 career information line, was developed in 2000 to provide a free impartial information and advice service. Targeted at people who may otherwise have no access to careers advice, a quarter of the calls came from secondary and tertiary students.

Career Services is still very concerned by the shortcomings of some schools in offering comprehensive information and guidance support to their students. Peter Speers, a Wellington career service manager, believes that until career education is seen as worthy of having a major place in secondary schools, it will be distributed only in a random fashion.

*The answer is not to make career education a subject in its own right but to integrate it in with all subjects. If every teacher brought to their subject*

*a degree of career consciousness and devoted some time covering career paths involving the application of their subject, that would be a great leap forward (Speers, 2000, p 8).*

To integrate career pathways as part of the school syllabus would involve a very different approach in teaching practice for many teachers. Sutton (1997) suggests the lack of staff commitment stems from the perceptions held by some staff of what constitutes career education. They feel it is a subject that focuses on personal development rather than academic development and is therefore competing for its share of curriculum time. This brings into conflict the philosophy of some schools, which have a historical provision for educating students in preparation for University rather than the many other options that are available. In the research I conducted in 2000 some students felt that unless they wanted to attend University visiting the career advisor was unhelpful because the career advisor felt that University was the most important option they should consider.

*Well like the career advisor said that if I was to get anywhere in life I had to go to University. I mean, I was so pissed off when he said this, I got really angry. I don't bother with him now (Jane in Smith, 2000, p 37).*

Some schools traditionally offer advice that promotes University as the preferred option. A consensus needs to be achieved in schools concerning the need for career education offering different pathways to fulfil the different needs of each student (Holmes, 1996). How consensus is to come about has not been addressed

by Government policy and is a major concern to stake holders if all schools are to provide a seamless careers service.

There has been considerable progress in career information and guidance in the last few years in New Zealand. Much of it has been developed by Career Services with the financial support of the Ministry of Education. The silent voice in much of the research concerning career information and guidance is that of the teachers and career advisors themselves. Research relating to how careers advisors found the career service benefited their students has not been addressed in recent years. Questions arise relating to how schools are promoting career information and guidance access to *KiwiCareers*, *CareerPoint* and other Career Service incentives, whether these are aspects of a larger school career development programme, and whether they address the needs of the career advisors in the information and guidance they offer.

#### **1.4 From the Students' Point of View**

Within Government policy, a technically rational view of career pathways is often assumed. From this perspective, good decision making takes the secondary school student through a series of logical steps, starting at year 9 and progressing through to year 13. With support and guidance from the school the students decide on their post-compulsory choices. Career maturity refers to this process and the students' readiness to make key career-related decisions. There is an expectation that students will have an understanding of their own abilities,



interests and work related issues and will demonstrate competence in integrating these factors to make well-informed decisions (McIntyre, 1998).

In New Zealand Lauder and Hughes (1990) interviewed working class students who had the potential to enter University but didn't consider it an option. Nash (1987) describes the approach of working class students as based on the students' family location within the class system. He suggests that the secondary school student and their learning are interconnected with a wide range of issues. Bloomer and Hodkinson (1998) elaborate further on this point:

*The decisions were based on partial information, which was localised, being based on the familiar and the known. The decision making was context related, and cannot be separated from the family background, culture and life histories of the person. The decisions were opportunistic, being based on fortuitous contacts and experiences. The timing of the decisions was sporadic, in that decisions were made when the person felt able to do so and were reactions to opportunities as they were encountered* (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 1998, p 304).

Nash describes how students make decisions based on the choices that the student feels are available to them. He suggests that secondary school students and their learning are interconnected with a wide range of issues. There is a growing body of literature (Brown and Collins, 1989; Guile and Young, 1998) on the relationship between learning and context, which stresses the communal nature of learning and the significance of the situation and activity in shaping the learning

process. It has been suggested (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000) that learning careers for secondary students are seldom linear, but often undergo many changes, the causes and effects of which are often hard to predict. For each student the causes and effects are very different and relevant only to the student as an individual, as they make the decision on the career path they wish to follow.

Research into subject selection procedures carried out in Western Australia in 1997 has found that many factors influence the students' ideas regarding career pathways. It was concluded that the degree to which students were influenced by different factors was difficult to discern. Bloomer and Hodkinson (1998) found that students were influenced by many different factors when deciding on their career pathways. These factors often included close friends and neighbors who worked in the similar fields and work experience at school (this could be a positive or mixed motivation); childhood interests that students would like to incorporate into their careers; or the students wanting training within their chosen field of employment (apprenticeships) were other factors. Some students changed their minds, while others were still unclear about their choices.

As the world of work becomes more complex, and technologically more dynamic, the career decision-making processes that secondary school students must undergo also become much more complicated. Determining what to do next in their lives is important but can become an arduous developmental task for many secondary school students.

McIntyre (1998) found that two-thirds of students indicated that their biggest concern at secondary school was career-related issues. This included unemployment, competition for jobs and the money needed to pursue higher education. Other research (Carpenter, 1997) indicates that many students had high aspirations which were unlikely to be achieved. A compromise was common between their ideal choice of occupation, and the one that the student actually entered.

### **1.5 Students and the World of Work**

Research in America shows that in the late 1990's two thirds of all university students withdraw once before finishing their qualifications, and 91% of those never earn a degree (Gray, 1999). Yet the main reason given for these students attending post secondary education was to get a good job. In the mid 1990's at least one in three university graduates was underemployed, while in professions such as teaching, engineering and marketing the ratio was one in two. In reality at least one in three, four-year degree graduates (in the USA) will be taking a job they could have achieved on graduating from secondary school (Gray, 1997).

Internationally and in New Zealand there is a major concern about students' realistic perceptions of post secondary options and how they relate to secondary school decision making (Vick, 1996; McMahon and Patton, 1997; Gray, 1999). Many students felt that subjects including Math, English and Science had no relationship to the different options they were considering when they had finished secondary school.

*I sit in math's and the teacher says I will need to know this to get a job, but what if I want to be a gardener? You don't have to know this to do that, and it doesn't prepare you for the real world does it? I mean half the stuff we learn I don't think has anything to do with the work force* (Vick, 1996, p 12).

One of the central points made by Associate Education Minister Steve Maharey in *Career Edge 2001*, is that students are making too many default choices. Many students unsure of their post-secondary pathway often choose University. University is considered a prestigious choice though not necessarily one that will lead into a career. Maharey does not think that University is always the right decision for young people, particularly when they make the choice because they can't think what else to do (Maharey, 2001, p 4).

In Australia also research suggests that students chose school subjects with a view to successful post secondary options into the workforce, but with grossly inadequate career development preparation, including the flimsiest knowledge of the workforce and entry into it (Vick, 1996; Whiteley and Porter, 1999). A common theme throughout the research found that many students were making career choices before they had been introduced to the skills or knowledge that might inform these decisions. Students seem relatively ignorant about work and have a lack of career guidance information (McMahon and Patton, 1997; Whiteley and Porter, 1999). This supports the importance of career advice in

schools and a more positive, interventionist role that could be taken by secondary schools.

Vick found in his interviews with Australian students that often the information was available to students, but they just did not know where or when to look for it (Vick, 1996). A high level of knowledge was needed for students even to begin to start enquiring about their career options. This knowledge was also necessary when students were selecting subjects to study during secondary school. Many made ill-informed choices, which had no relationship to the post-secondary options they were considering. These students made default choices concerning their future career pathways because they did not have an understanding of the options available to them or even how to investigate their choices.

### **1.6 Learning Theory and Career Development in Education**

Learning theories of career development maintain that career development is a learning process. Cognitive changes result in changes in vocational behaviours: vocational learning is a function of motivation and the student acts to satisfy their vocational needs (Maduakolam, 2000). For example, a student might decide to become an art teacher, which requires gaining entrance into a University Bachelor of Arts programme with a B grade average in Bursary subjects. The student will be motivated to gain high grades at school to continue onto University and on to their goal to become an art teacher. This overtly positive example does not take into consideration the family, social and economic issues that may arise in the student's life. This is a positive motivation for students who have clear post

secondary goals and an understanding of how to achieve them. It does not take into consideration those students who have no or low goals or motivation.

Ginzberg in 1951 concluded that there are three stages of occupation choice. The first stage is defined as the fantasy stage (ages 6 to 11). The child identifies a desire for an occupation and tries out make believe work roles. The choices are arbitrary and made without reference to reality. I ran a sweet shop in my parents' woolshed for several months and the fact I had no sweets, we lived on a farm and my customers were the pet sheep, never deterred me from my game.

The second stage, the tentative period (ages 11 to 17), marks a concern for the reality of getting a job. Selection is based on likes, interests and the person's ability to function in the areas of interest. The tentative stage is pivotal to the individual's development and corresponds to the end of secondary school (Ginzberg et al.). My sweet shop is packed away and I start painting and decide I want to be an artist. The final stage, the realistic period (18 +), is characterised by acquisition of the experiences and education that are needed to achieve post secondary employment. My paints are put in storage and I study textile design.

*The person becomes aware that he or she must fashion out a compromise between his or her desires and the existing opportunities in the real world. Occupational choice is not a single decision, but a developmental process which takes place over a period of ten or more years (Ginzberg, Ginzberg, Axelrad and Herma, 1951, p 24).*

Fifty years ago Ginzberg et al recognised the need for career information and guidance to be a process of development over several years. Yet in New Zealand it has been a focus in Government policy only over the last ten years, and in some secondary schools is still not recognised as a factor worth considering.

At the 1997 Career Planning Conference, *Signposting the Future*, Tim Feely (1997) in the introduction to his paper said, "Education institutions are very busy educating people. They are so busy they often forget to ask themselves... WHY?" Career development theories serve as a guide for career education and information by tying together research about career choices. Theories provide a conceptual framework in which to view the types of career-related problems that emerge during secondary school (Brown and Brooks, 1996; Sharf, 1997). Research and policy planning are going to be important aspects of future career advice in New Zealand secondary schools if students are to benefit from comprehensive and effective career planning as individuals.

There has not been a large body of research into many areas of education in New Zealand (Thrupp, Harold, Mansell and Hawksworth; 2000). This means there is not enough research evidence to inform the often-intense policy debate over education reforms (Thrupp, 1999). New Zealand has a small educational research community, which has often not had the support of the Ministry of Education to do funded research that is genuinely examining the impact of education reforms (Thrupp, Harold, Mansell and Hawksworth; 2000).

The present Government believes that careers education needs to be available to all New Zealanders. The Government is moving away from a private market career service to one that has a commitment to providing information and practical support at all levels of the sector. This includes supporting secondary schools in applying the National Administration Guideline one, iv on a practical level.

*The argument this Government has made is that we ought to look at good information and to some extent good guidance as fundamental to the economy. The reason is simple. People don't have very stable careers any more, they move in a variety of ways over a working life. They need good information to be able to do that, both in terms of what they should learn to advance their career and in terms of the job they are undertaking* (Maharey, 2001, p 2).

In international literature there is a strong theme that career information and guidance must play a key role in societies in the future if a knowledge economy is to be successful (Smith, 1999). Although there is little direct evidence to support the proposition that career guidance has benefits economically and socially to society, it is commonly supposed that this is the case. According to Chapman (1993) little research has included assessing the value of information given to school students, and the impact this information has on society generally. It is beginning to be acknowledged that unless people, and more specifically secondary school students, have an informed personal career plan, they will have trouble finding employment.



## **1.7 The Role of Career Advisors in Secondary Schools**

One of the major themes found in literature concerning the experience of career advisors in secondary schools in New Zealand was the limited time that was available for career staff to advise students. Generally staff in the schools interviewed by Diana McIntyre (1998) supported the need for and importance of an integrated, well-coordinated careers service. In practice McIntyre found that teachers were not supportive of career provision if it meant students missed timetabled classes. Sutton (1997) also found a common feeling among career advisors that teaching staff felt that time for career advice was an invasion of their subject time. An integrated well-coordinated career service was considered a target for future development rather than what was actually happening in many schools at the time by career advisors.

*The amount of time allocated to careers assistance in the schools was seen to be the most important resource available and the majority of staff involved with the career service found that time was inadequate to meet the various needs of students (McIntyre, 1998, p 173).*

Several career advisors thought a positive move would be to integrate career advice throughout the school curriculum, in order to facilitate awareness of career provision amongst the staff. Others felt that it would be difficult to monitor the expertise of teachers and questioned whether you could apply career advice to some school subjects (Sutton, 1997).

Another theme found in the literature, which directly related to careers advice in New Zealand secondary schools, was professionalism. There has been ongoing discussion about full time specialist career personnel whose primary role is career guidance in schools (Ministry of Education, 1995; Cole, 1996; Holmes, 1996). In particular, developments in career guidance have not kept up with the increasingly diverse needs of students. The Ministry of Education, Careers Information and Guidance Review Panel (1995) criticised the variability of career services in New Zealand secondary schools. The good practice guidelines they have developed were focused on strengthening this aspect of career provision in schools (ibid, 1995)

Many career advisory staff felt that there was a major training need, especially comprehensive courses relating to updates on National Qualification Framework issues and career pathways linked to NZQA courses and qualifications (McIntyre, 1998). There was also major concern amongst many career staff about their changing role in secondary schools and the need for them to have career counselling skills.

### **1.8 Career Counselling in Secondary Schools**

Career counselling is focused on people who have not been able to arrive at realistic career goals despite some exposure to different career pathways. Career counselling includes expert knowledge about work opportunities and other essential knowledge about adult life (Byrne and Beavers, 1991). Without this

support, some students cannot make realistic choices about future career pathways that are relevant to their lives.

*If individuals are to secure progression in their learning and work within the fragmented world of flexible labour markets, career counselling is critical. A massive increase is needed both in quantity of such guidance and in its quality (Watts, A. 1997, p 77).*

Training in how to listen to students and skills needed for motivating students were common themes for career advisors in secondary schools, as was time management and training in managing information. The Careers Information and Guidance Review Panel (1997) considered that inadequate provision for training career advisors was a major concern for many secondary schools. Often advisors relied on a commonsense approach, which was seen as the traditional method in the past, but is often not beneficial for secondary school students in today's changing and challenging environment.

The role of career advice in schools has changed considerably in the last ten years. Historically career education involved offering advice and information on a range of different options that were available to secondary school students. Career choice and decision-making are no longer concerned with one single life event (Sutton, 1997). The skills required in making these decisions need to be facilitated by a trained career advisor who has the resources of time and training to fully advise students in the choices they are making.

It is common in many New Zealand secondary schools for career advice staff to have responsibility for several other areas in the school. These can include several or all of the following; a high teaching load, special needs education, co-ordinating staff, industry links, STAR (Secondary Tertiary Alliance Resource) co-ordination, transition classes and writing a new transition syllabus for the Framework (McIntyre, 1998). Many career advisors felt that the needs of the students were being compromised because of these responsibilities, combined with a lack of time and lack of specialised training in the area of career provision.

Research indicates (Holmes, 1996; Sutton, 1997; McIntyre, 1998) the vital, although limited, role of good career information resources in a student's quest for post-secondary direction. Students cannot always effectively process information found on databases or through written material. It is important that career advisors have access to a range of resources enabling them to provide the personal support that is needed to guide today's secondary school students.

### **1.9 New Directions**

One central theme that runs through research concerning career provision is that it must play a key role in the future development of individuals identifying and using career information in order to manage their way in the changing world of work. Career advice in secondary schools can no longer be concerned only with the immediate needs of post secondary options. Students need to be able to develop strategies for career changes and life long learning.

*Like other countries, New Zealand is experiencing considerable shifts in patterns of employment which will affect the way we can take advantage of future opportunities. 'Non-standard' employment (employment other than full time, regular, permanent work) is becoming more common. It includes part-time work; casual work; work at irregular hours or on-call; seasonal; temporary or fixed-term contracts; self-employment; and/or home work. For some individuals these categories may well overlap* (Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment: Issues paper, 1994, p 35).

In secondary schools career advice needs to be an important aspect of students' learning if we are to equip New Zealand students with the skills and resources to survive in today's work force. Good practice guidelines are required to assist and encourage schools to provide high quality career education, information and guidance services (Career Information and Guidance Review Panel, 1995).

#### **1.10 Conclusion**

Much of the literature does not address careers provision in schools from the perspective of the career advisors. The research that does (Holmes, 1996; Sutton, 1997; McIntyre, 1998) indicates a conflict between the service the career advisors thought they should be able to provide and the work they were actually doing in providing career advice in secondary schools. Considerable changes have taken place in the last three to four years since the above research was completed. Several new initiatives, many recommended by the Ministry of Education, Career Information and Guidance Review Panel, (1995) have been implemented.

Other changes include a review of ERO. It was concluded that ERO often left schools “feeling battered and abandoned after an ERO review” (ERO review, 2000). It has been recommended that criticism be constructive and followed closely by functional solutions. Secondary schools need practical advice when implementing career information and guidance for secondary school students. Constructive approaches from ERO when reporting on schools will, one hopes, provide a culture of support for the schools that are struggling with career information and guidance.

There are many more opportunities in 2001 for career advisors and their students to access information and resources, than there were in 1997 and 1998. These include *KiwiCareers*, the Career Services Internet site, free 0800 number access to Career Services career information line, and training and courses that have been developed for advisors, students and their parents. This new level of research and support does not often include the voice of the career advisors themselves. Do they have easy access to this information? Do they have the time to access it? Is there still an impression among career advisors that they are not seen as an important element in today's schools? Is the \$60,000,000 extra the Government has invested in schools in 2001, being reflected in the career service that is being offered in secondary schools? The gaps in the literature show that further research is needed, and thus lead directly to the main research question of this thesis: **Is career advice in New Zealand secondary schools working?**

Both the individual and society have much to gain from secondary school students having a capacity to develop career pathways, which are realistic and productive. Career development is a social and a personal process, which ultimately should prepare the student with the resources to manage career transactions throughout their lives. As shown in the above research, being a career advisor in today's secondary schools is not always straightforward. This thesis examines some of the stories and processes associated with the experience of providing career advice in New Zealand secondary schools in 2001.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

### **2.1 The Evolution of the Project**

A qualitative research methodology was chosen for this research. My interest in qualitative research lies in the meanings that are constructed by the individuals who are participating in the reality that is their professional working life. Qualitative research enables the researcher to discover the nature of meaning for different people in the same or similar situations (Patton, 1990).

Merriam (1998) believes that research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers great promise to the knowledge base and practice of education. In this chapter I will compare qualitative and quantitative methods and discuss the traditions of qualitative research. This will develop into an explanation of the different research methods that will be used during my research in the field.

### **2.2 Traditions of Qualitative Research**

Researchers in anthropology and sociology have used qualitative methods for over a hundred years, although the term qualitative research has been used in the social sciences only since the 1960's (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Qualitative research is used as an umbrella term (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998) that encompasses many different research strategies that can share certain characteristics.



The first studies in anthropology were a means for researchers to begin to make sense of how people lived in different cultures. One of the first people to study education in this way was Margaret Mead. Mead started her field studies in Samoa and in her study *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Mead, 1928) covers the lives of sixty-eight girls between the ages of eight and twenty approximately. Mead's major focus was on the education of this particular group of girls in Samoa, and the (positive) influence on American education that this knowledge could have.

*The strongest light will fall upon the ways in which Samoan education, in its broadest sense, differs from our own. And from this contrast we may be able to turn, made newly and vividly self-conscious and self-critical, to judge anew and perhaps fashion differently the education we give our children* (Mead 1928, p 18).

*Coming of Age in Samoa* was Mead's first publication, which became a best seller in 1928 and opened the doors for leading anthropologists, scientists and teachers in future qualitative studies.

Between 1915 and 1940 the University of Chicago exercised a disproportionate influence upon the course of qualitative research (Bulmer, 1984). The "Chicago School" was a label applied to a group of sociological researchers teaching and learning in the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago. They relied on first hand data gathering for their research. The Chicago School represented the first successful American programme of collective sociological research. They were influenced by Chicago's city life and studied against a backdrop of the local community. Concerned with the voices of people who were seldom listened

to, including *The Boys' Gang* (Thrasher, 1927), *The Jewish Ghetto* (Wirth, 1928), and *The Thief* (Sutherland, 1937), the Chicago School introduced new elements in research and new techniques to study these elements which were not standard to empirical investigations in the traditional sense (Bruyn, 1966).

*The hallmark of the Chicago School of Sociology was the blending of firsthand inquiry with general ideas, the integration of research and theory as part of an organised programme* (Bulmer, 1984, p 3).

Quantitative research in contrast represented the dominant school of thought in educational sociology at the time with the exception of a few younger sociologists. Willard Waller was a qualitative researcher who relied on in depth interviews, life histories, participant observation, personal records, and case records. In *Sociology of Teaching* (1932) Waller considered that children were not learning machines but human beings constructed in complex social cultures. For Waller, insight informed the scientific method, not the reverse.

Research in Britain and Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was centred on qualitative approaches to understanding people's day-to-day lives. Researchers studied groups of people by living with them and trying to gain a perspective of what their lives were like. Charles Booth conducted extensive research over seventeen years concerning the poor and how they lived their lives. While much of his research was based on quantitative surveys documenting the extent of poverty in 1886, he also kept extensive field notes documenting descriptions of the people he studied (Webb, 1926).

Beatrice Webb along with her husband worked on Booth's project collecting information on the poor. Her first hand experience of the sufferings of the poor grounded her in the realities of these people's lives. She became a sympathetic as opposed to objective researcher, who contributed greatly to the field of qualitative research. Based on this research the Webbs published a description of their methodology, which was widely read in the United States (Webb and Webb, 1932).

The Government in the United States during the depression of the 1930's turned to a qualitative approach to record the extent of the problems experienced by a majority of American citizens. Documentary photography at this time was a prominent research tool. The Roosevelt administration hired photographers to document the daily lives of people all over the country (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). These photographers, including John Collier, Walker Evans and Lewis Hine, wrote about the people they met, how those people lived and the ways in which they gained rapport with the people they were photographing (Collier, 1967).

During the 1960's educational researchers began to show interest in qualitative methods and research rather than relying solely on sociological and anthropological studies. American society was beginning to ask questions about minority children in schools and poor educational performance. Educators wanted to discuss the work they were doing in schools and speak from the chalk face about the situations they were teaching in (Decker, 1969).

The basic premise taken by educators was that education was failing children from poor backgrounds, and to address these problems research needed to be undertaken in different ways to understand how this situation could be changed. Qualitative research was seen as a means to more fully understand the background of these children's lives. Jules Henry studied elementary schools in St. Louis (Gouldner, 1978), where he investigated racial issues in education using fieldwork methods to collect data. By fully exploring the day to day lives of the children it was hoped different solutions could be found to solve the problems faced by schools and the community.

In the 1970's conflicts emerged between the cooperative versus the conflictual approach to qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Cooperative researchers believed that they should be as honest as possible about the research they were conducting and their position in the field. In contrast conflictual practitioners felt that truthful accounts of the research would mean information would be less forthcoming, especially in the field of business or organised crime, and so the data would not be a true record of the situation they were researching.

Feminist research in the 1970's and 80's had a significant impact on the qualitative approach. Gender, from a feminist perspective, emerged as a central topic in many qualitative research projects (Warren, 1988). Researchers using in-depth interviewing, participant observation, life history analysis and document analysis took the participants seriously. Methodological questions were also affected, including questioning the nature of feminist research methods and the

practice of how these methods were utilised. Oakley (1981) was concerned about the power play in interviews, and the dominant role of the researcher when talking to participants.

Postmodernists argue that you can know something only from a certain position, and there is no scientific true use of reason, because people do not reason outside of the self's location in a specific historical time and body (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Science has contributed to an understanding and control of the physical world, but postmodernists suggest that no one method of inquiry can claim to be true, or better than any other method, in developing knowledge in the human world (Gall, Gall, Borg, 1999). Postmodernists question the relevance of research in understanding human nature and society. This has caused social science researchers to identify several characteristics of qualitative research that establish its claim and differentiate it from other forms of inquiry. The development of specialised concepts and procedures that are published in the public arena have enabled researchers to make their procedures sufficiently explicit for others to replicate them. This allows other researchers to understand whether the effects and insights are unique to the individual or can inform the work of others.

Critical theory has had an ideological influence on qualitative methodology. Critical theorists are interested in how people make choices in society and how these choices affect their lives. Weis (1990) studied how working-class high school men think about whiteness and privilege when they no longer have access to industrial work. Critical theorists claim that you cannot focus on one form of

oppression at the expense of others, and that it is necessary to examine all the cultural categories that are used to separate and oppress different groups, and to consider their overall effects.

*Basic to work in the critical-theory tradition is cultural critique. The term 'critical' is used in critical theory to refer to a systematic process of review and analysis of cultural phenomena. In the process, hidden assumptions underlying accepted but problematic cultural practices are exposed, along with their negative aspects. (Gall, J. Gall, M. Borg, W. 1999, p 361)*

Some studies draw from both feminism and critical theory (Weiler, 1988) and postmodernism has influenced to some degree discussions of method within qualitative research. In education the immense amount of qualitative research that has been conducted over the last thirty years has ensured a rich and varied field of endeavor.

### **2.3 Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology**

There has been a lot of discussion about the differences between quantitative and qualitative research and the merits of each. I chose qualitative research methods as the most appropriate for the nature of my research question. I am interested in narrative and the different stories people tell about certain aspects of their lives, in this case secondary school careers advisors. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) refer to the qualitative researcher as a quilt maker:

*The qualitative researcher who uses montage is like a quilt maker...The quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p 5).

When making a quilt, fabrics are collected from a wide variety of sources over a length of time. All the fabric is then accessed and slowly disregarded or utilised as part of the finished article. No one piece of fabric is more or less important than any other, it is not until the last piece of fabric is stitched to the main body of the quilt, that the impact of the work can be appreciated. The qualitative researcher creates and brings psychological and emotional unity to an interpretative experience. Lather and Smithies (1997) stitch a complex text about women who are HIV positive and women with AIDS. They use different women's stories, personal narrative and images of angels to build a picture of the realities of these women's lives. In the present research, the different advisors' stories will form the fabric pieces.

Qualitative research is often considered "soft" research as it deals with interpreting social realities. Quantitative research, on the other hand, relies heavily on numerical data and statistical analysis, and is considered "hard" research. Quantitative researchers assume that the features of the human environment have an objective reality, and that they exist independently of the individuals observing them (Gall, Gall, Borg, 1999).

*Statistical methods are especially useful for looking at relationships and patterns and expressing these patterns with numbers. Descriptive statistics describe these patterns of behaviour, while inferential statistics*

*use probabilistic arguments to generalise findings from samples to populations of interest* (Rudestam, Newton, 1992, p 24).

The focus of quantitative research is the study of average or group effects as opposed to individual differences. Information is usually gathered through large-scale surveys, one of the most dominant in New Zealand society being the Government Census. This type of information is a key ingredient when providing Government policy advice. It gives information on what is happening, e.g. how many people live in a house, what people earn etc. One of the gaps perceived in this type of information collection is that it does not answer questions about why these situations have come about, e.g. why are so many people living in the house? How do they earn this amount? These questions over the last few years have brought about an understanding that there is no single way to conduct research (Rudestam, Newton, 1992; Gall, Gall, Borg, 1999). Different research approaches are suitable for different situations depending on the focus of analysis, time and money. Some of the main differences between quantitative and qualitative research include characteristics discussed in the following paragraphs.

To summarise, quantitative research is believed to assume an objective social reality, which is relatively constant across time and space. An objective, detached stance is taken towards participants and their settings in which behaviour and other observable phenomena are studied. The data collected is determined by using preconceived concepts, theories and hypotheses. Numerical data is used to



represent the social environment and statistical methods analyse this data. Impersonal, objective reports are written to present the research findings.

Qualitative research on the other hand assumes a social reality constructed by the participants in it. Human interactions play a major role in explaining causal relationships among social phenomena. The researcher becomes personally involved with the research participants who are interviewed in their natural surroundings. Verbal and pictorial data are generated to represent the social environment. Interpretive reports are written that reflect the researchers' constructions of the data with awareness that readers will form their own constructions from what is reported (Wolcott, 2001).

Different people are always going to be associated with different approaches to educational research. As I commented at the beginning of this chapter I use qualitative research as the basis of this study, to understand the experience of career advisors in five New Zealand secondary schools.

## **2.4 Qualitative Research and Case Studies**

Qualitative case studies are prevalent throughout the field of education (Merriam, 1998). Case studies are conducted in order to describe, explain, or evaluate particular social phenomena (Gall, Gall, Borg, 1999). In my research I am interested in the stories several career advisors tell about their jobs. Robert Stake (2000) calls this a collective case study.

*It is instrumental study extended to several cases...They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases* (Stake, 2000, p 435).

By interviewing different career advisors I hoped that an understanding would develop about the type of career information and guidance that is provided in New Zealand secondary schools. The research would also investigate the barriers that exist for the different career advisors. Data was collected through semi structured interviews.

There were two interviews for each participant. The first was based on a semi-structured person to person interview, the purpose of which was to enter into the participant's perspective (Patton, 1990). I am not a career advisor and so it was in this first interview that an understanding of the position was developed. The participant was given a camera and asked to take photographs, which further describe their role. This gave me the opportunity to have a deeper understanding of how each career advisor perceived their position without me following them around. The photographs were discussed in the second interview.

## **2.5 Qualitative Research and the use of Photographs**

The role of the photograph in this research is an important aspect of the interview process. The camera as a research tool has had many critics, since Jacob A. Riis (1890) took some of the first documentary images in the United States. Riis was a

reporter who was interested in depicting the lifestyles of people living in New York slums. The main criticism of such photography was the motivation of the photographer, and how this could influence the work (Ziller, 1990).

*Moreover, it can be argued that the camera gives validity to any set of appearances whatsoever, contrived as film, and thus is constantly open to the question of quackery (Collier, 1975, p 136).*

Bateson and Mead in 1942 published *Balinese Character* using a combination of text and still photographs. 25,000 still shots and 22,000 ft. of 16-mm movie film were the basis of the final publication, which focused on children interacting with each other and their parents. The interesting aspect of this publication was the detail in which Bateson and Mead addressed the usually unrecorded specifics of the film process, establishing scientific credibility within their research.

More recently New Zealanders have recorded through image and text, a narrative that represents different aspects of the sociality we live in. Glenn Busch (1991) explains this process in *You are my Darling Zita*,

*For a long time now, using a camera and a tape recorder as passports, I have had the opportunity to enter other worlds, to meet, talk, and form friendships with people I would never have normally know. They have consented to explore and reveal parts of their emotional life, to show uncovered the private depths of their experience in a world more at ease with the superficial (Busch, 1991, p 7).*

Busch interviewed six New Zealanders, who were born around 1900. He spent many hours recording their testimonies, and used family photographs combined with photographic portraits he made at the time of the interview.

Julie Riley (1993) records the people of Reefton, struggling with change, dependent on each other, full of compassion, pride and conflict. Her photographs show a portrait of the people who live in the town and the town itself, giving the viewer an intimate understanding of the text as Riley describes life in Reefton. This type of research photography is often labelled, "visual records of social groups" (Ziller, 1990) and can still contain the problem of the actors' behaviour when they are aware that they are being observed. Weick (1985) notes that observers should not assume that stable behaviour means typical behaviour, for one of the most prominent effects of being observed is that people can emit more positive behaviours than they might if they were alone. I also noted that a few of the photographs were inconsistent with the text in Riley's work. This could be seen as an example of people emitting positive behaviours or the effect of the writers' perspective when collating the imagery and transcripts.

In 1966 Worth and Adair (1972) used a more direct approach and asked the Navajo Indians to make their own images. They were given minimum instruction and asked to make movies using cameras to capture their own lives. Worth made the distinction between "records of" and "records about" culture. The photographs allowed the Navajos to produce images showing their personal conception of the world or "records of" their culture. The results revealed

Navajos' cognition patterns, narrative style, and ordering of time and space (Ziller, 1990).

*Records of culture are the documents made by members of a culture themselves, while records about culture are the documents made by outsiders* (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998, p 122).

The use of the participant photographer, in contrast to the researcher photographer, means that one person has been removed from the process. This enables the participants to be actively involved in documenting their own lives. The participant is also less concerned or aware of the analysis of the photographs, and can often capture ideas that they may not have expressed in an interview situation. Worth described this approach as a "biodocumentary", which he defined as a film made by a person to show how they feel about themselves and their world (Worth, 1972).

Ziller (1990) extended this approach with the use of an instamatic camera that was given to participants who were asked the question "Who are you?" Each person had six days to take twelve photographs describing who he or she was. Ziller found several advantages to this approach. The participants were able to provide vast amounts of information representing themselves in any framework they decided on. This also enabled them to avoid some verbal shortcomings in answering this question. Ziller also found, and I have experienced this in previous research, that people have a high level of input into discussing the photographs and often request copies of the photographs that they have put much considered

time and energy into taking. They feel they are making an important contribution, which is not always the case in interviews or surveys.

A significant aspect of the use of photographs in qualitative research is content analysis. In this research a comparative study of working practices (Prosser & Schwartz 1998) will be used to explore the similarities and differences in the career advisors' work environments. Collier and Collier (1986) term this a "cultural inventory" in which the researcher analyses the layout of the spaces the participants have photographed.

*The layout of the space is not arbitrary but tells us a great deal about the participants, about who they are, what they do, and how they behave in their rooms* (Prosser & Schwartz 1998, p 128).

An important aspect of this analysis is the participants narrative concerning the content of the photographs. The explanations given, for why the photographs were taken, means the researcher gains a greater understanding of the environment and culture, in the case of this thesis, of the five secondary school career advisors being interviewed.

Very little has been written about the role of photographs in the research process (Worth & Adair, 1972; Ziller, 1990; Prosser, & Schwartz, 1998), how the research proceeds depends very much on the researcher's theoretical role. As an educational researcher I find the use of photography gives me a greater insight into the lives of the people I am researching, without being obtrusive. The

photographs will not be used in the final presentation of the thesis, as this would compromise the privacy of the school, the career advisor and the students. They are utilised as a trigger and insight into the roles of the career advisors as part of the process of developing themes within the research.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The expansion of qualitative methods in education has meant that this chapter is both selective and brief in that it focuses only on aspects that directly influence my own research practice for this study. Historically I have outlined a number of projects that have been influenced by qualitative methodology, and the use of case studies and photographs as research tools. Contrasting quantitative and qualitative methodology has given me greater insight into how the different approaches can be used, according to their relevance to the research problem, and has justified my selection of a qualitative approach to address the research question of this thesis. The next chapter will discuss the history and implementation of the project, the research design, fieldwork, and data analysis.

## **Chapter Three: Implementation**

### **3.1 The History of the Project**

The specific research plan for this thesis evolved over the last two years according to the opportunities and events that presented themselves. The changes that have occurred have been in response to my growing knowledge of the subject and the research process.

#### **3.1.1 Prior Research Project**

In an earlier project (Smith, 2000) I studied how secondary school students decided on their future career paths. The focus of that research was on the different factors that influence students to make the career choices they do, exploring what the students thought about their lives in the last months of secondary school and the choices they were making about the destination in which they were heading. Titled *Snapshot of Experience* the research was based on six students at a local secondary school and their experiences in the last two terms of the school, as they decided on their future destinations.

Four main themes emerged in that earlier research that had the greatest influence on the six students: family, friends, school and work. Within each of these four themes the influences affected the students in different ways. The second stage of this research and the subject of my thesis developed from the questions that arose during my interviews with the secondary students. Of the six students interviewed, two felt unhappy with the advice they had received from the career advisor at the secondary school, and one was travelling overseas so did not



consider visiting the school career advisor. Three students utilised the service when they felt they needed to, and felt it benefited the decisions they were making. The students I interviewed were directly affected by the location of decision making, and the provision for career advice within the school. (Smelt, 1998)

### **3.1.2 The Current Project**

My interest in the current research project lies in how career advice within the school is now provided to the students. From the few students I interviewed only 50% utilised the service to positive effect. This led to my questioning how the providers of the service, the career advisors, felt about the position they held and the effectiveness of the career information and guidance they were giving to their students. From the literature survey (see Chapter 1) I identified a number of concerns and issues that led to the key research question "Is career advice in New Zealand Secondary Schools working?"

The research question of this thesis thus grew from both my prior research and the literature survey. As in the prior research I am interested in the realities constructed by individuals of their experiences (Merriam, 1992): the realities of the school career advisors, in the secondary schools in which they are employed to provide career advice.

### **3.1.3 Plan of Approach**

- > Identify schools to approach.

- > Contact each school Principal with information, and request permission to interview career advisors (Refer Appendix's A, B and D)
- > With Principal's consent, contact the career advisors. (Refer Appendix's C and E)
- > Read ERO reports, and school background information relating to the schools whose career advisors agree to participate.
- > Interview the career advisor, leaving them with a camera to take photographs of their environment. (Refer Appendix F)
- > Transcribe the interviews and review categories.
- > Second interview with the career advisor discussing the photographs. (Refer Appendix G)
- > Analyse the data.
- > Draw conclusions.

### **3.2 Approaching the Career Advisors**

Initially I wrote to nine principals at secondary schools chosen partly for their geographical convenience and partly because they represented a range of typical New Zealand schools. The reason for this was based on my ability to conduct at least two interviews with each career advisor in the time available and my ability to process the photographs that I wanted the career advisors to take as the basis of the second interview. It was also important that I be able to conduct the interviews in places chosen by each career advisor. This had implications for both the time I had available and the busy schedules of the career advisors who were working full time.

The Appendix section has copies of the information sheet, consent forms, and the letters that were sent to the principals and the career advisors.

Of the nine principals I contacted, outlining the research with information sheets and consent forms, seven agreed that I could approach the career advisor in the school. Of the two principals that did not consent, one school did not have a career advisor, and the other principal felt they were too busy at this time of year. Five of the seven career advisors subsequently approached agreed to be interviewed. Two felt they had too many commitments to be interviewed and declined.

### **3.3 The Schools**

I wanted to obtain a range of realities from different career advisors in different schools. I am not a career advisor and had few preconceived ideas of the role or its responsibilities.

My final thesis is based on findings from five career advisors working in five secondary schools in the lower North Island. Two of those schools were co-educational, two were single-sex girls' schools and one was a single-sex boys' school. The largest school had a roll of over 1400 students, the smallest a roll of over 200 students. Three schools were high decile schools, ranking ten, nine and eight, one was decile six, a medium decile school, and one was decile two (Ministry of Education, 1997).

The decile ranking is the socio-economic indicator of New Zealand schools, ranging from ten, a high socio-economic school, to one, a low socio-economic school. The decile ranking is developed from six dimensions: equivalent household income, parents' occupation, household crowding, parents' educational qualifications, income support payments received by parents, and the percentage of students who are of Maori or Pacific ethnicity (Ministry of Education, 1997).

The decile ten school had a roll of 94% European students, 5% Maori and 1% Asian students; the decile nine, eight and six schools had on average 80% European students with 10% Maori students, 5% Asian students, and 5% were termed "other". The decile two school had the highest proportions of Maori Pacific and Asian students with approximately 50% of the students being Maori, and Pacific Island students, 40% of the students from a European background, and 10% of the students Asian (specific ERO reports on the five schools are not referenced, to protect the privacy of the schools). The range of schools represented was, I concluded, sufficient for the purposes of this research.

### **3.4 Phases of the Interviews**

The research is based on two interviews with each career advisor. The first interview in all but one instance took place at the school in the career advisor's office or the classroom. One interview was conducted in the career advisor's home as it was during term holidays. From personal experience of previous research I wanted to tape-record all interviews with the permission of the participants, and all agreed to the interview being taped. I have found in the past

that the notes I take are inconsistent and I get so involved in the conversation that I miss out large parts of the narrative. I can write notes or listen, but not both to any satisfying level. The interviews were semi-structured and based on a series of questions I had developed from my literature review findings and the schools' Education Review Office reports.

*A second way to record interview data is to take notes during the interview. Since not everything said can be recorded, and since at the outset of a study a researcher is not certain what is important enough to write down, this method is only recommended when mechanical recording is not feasible (Merriam, 1998, p 84).*

Each of the first interviews took on average 45 minutes duration and was transcribed by me on the day of the interview. This is a long drawn out process, which I like to complete myself. It gives me time to reflect on the contents of each interview and start to consider the different career advisors and their positions. At the commencement of each interview I asked the career advisor to choose a nom de plume to be used in the final thesis (hence the different forms of name used later on). I also asked each career advisor to take a series of photographs, using a disposable camera, which I supplied. The camera was to be used to take a visual record of the different aspects of the career advisor's responsibilities in the school. All the career advisors were happy to complete this task. A postage paid envelope was supplied with my address so that the films could be posted back to me and I could develop them ready for the next interview.

The second interview was based on the career advisors talking about the photographs they had taken. All the second interviews were conducted at the secondary schools in the career advisors' offices. These interviews were unstructured, as the career advisor explained the photographs and the significance their content had on the day to day delivery of career advice in the school.

### **3.5 The Use of Photographs**

My first experience in the use of photographs as a research tool was through the work of Robin McKinlay who utilised them as part of her thesis in 1983. McKinlay took photos of the spaces in which the people she was interviewing lived. I decided that my presence as a photographer would be too intimidating, and McKinlay did mention that often the interviewee did not want to take part in the photographs. Photo-observation is often limited by the presence of the photographer and has not been extensively utilised in education research.

*It must be stated at the outset that photography is a discourse between the photographer and the subject of the photograph and the viewer. The photographer (the observer) is compelled to attend selectively to elements of the potential field of interest. Everything cannot be observed at once, so the observer orients to given subjects for a complex set of reasons, often unknown and unstated (Ziller, 1990, p 22).*

By taking myself out of the situation and having the interviewee take the photographs, the reasons the photographs were taken were based solely on the choices made by the career advisor, not my interpretation of the career advisor

and their environment. The photographic approach to field research does have its limitations, but as an additional medium it has unique capabilities to capture feelings and reveal values, attitudes and concerns that lie beyond the conscious control of the photographer (Ziller, 1990).

Photographs are generally used to record happy events such as birthdays and holidays in our lives and most people find it easy to take photographs of their environment. This enables us to take photos that show aspects of our lives that we may not talk about in an interview situation. In this research I gained a deeper understanding of each career advisor and their relationship with the physical aspects of the school and their students and other staff. One career advisor thought that the students would think she was silly taking the photographs and did not include them in any of the 20 photographs she took. Another career advisor involved the whole school, taking photographs of the staff room, students in class and in the career office. These two different attitudes in taking photographs helped me have a greater understanding of the two different career advisors and how they saw their role as a career advisor in the school. On many different levels photographs can give a level of understanding that can not always be expressed in words.

Each of the career advisors, once they understood the reasons for taking photographs, was happy to contribute in this way. Two different approaches in taking the photographs emerged. Three of the participants covered a day in their life at the school, which started at the front entrance of the school when they

arrived and included all the responsibilities they had throughout the school day. The other approach was structured over a week and included different career advice activities that the career advisor participated in.

What was interesting was that, while I did not indicate the structure or layout of the photographs, these were the logical sequences decided on by each of the participants. I taped the conversation while the career advisor talked me through and discussed each photo. In each interview the participant described the contents of each photograph and the significance it had to their position. This provoked a wide range of responses and a variety of insights into the environments and the people who affected the delivery of career advice in the school.

### **3.6 Background Data Collection**

Before I interviewed the career advisors I read all five schools' recent Education Review Office (ERO) reports, which are available on the Internet. According to ERO the scope of the report evaluates the quality of education received by students and the performance of the Board of Trustees in providing education services (Chief Review Officer, ERO, 1998). It is noted however by ERO that:

*As yet in New Zealand there is no national assessment system through which improvements in student learning can be evaluated in comparative or individual school or student terms (ERO, May, 2001, p 1).*

Reading the school ERO reports gave me a general overview of the provision for a balanced curriculum within each school, through an overview of each subject



area and the support received by staff and students. The provision of career advice is not highly documented by ERO, but comments are made on the provision for career advice within the school, the resources that are available and how well this information is used by students.

The information found in the reports did not always relate to the resources I was shown or the different provisions within the school to provide career advice. This could be due to many factors including the date ERO visited the school and the different people they talked to. Many schools introduce junior students to career advice in their social studies and health curricula, but this was not mentioned in any of the reports. Career advice provision was commented on only in the senior school. The reports did enable me to focus my questions and start to build a picture on the type of education that was offered at each school.

### **3.7 The Interview Questions**

The overall research question of this thesis centred on the five career advisors and how they personally find their role within the secondary school. The following questions were the focus of the initial interview:

- Describe a typical day?
- How long have you been a career advisor and has the role changed since you have been in the position?
- Do you get adequate and effective training to fulfil your position?
- How has the National Administration Guideline 1(iv) (NAG 1, iv) affected your responsibilities as a secondary school career advisor?

- What do you enjoy about the position?
- What do you find challenging about the position?
- Is career advice provided at all levels of the school?
- Do you have any other responsibilities, apart from providing career advice?
- Does the teaching staff support career education within the school?
- Anything I have missed out?

Because of the semi-structured approach I used during the first interview, the career advisors often answered several questions at once or changed the topic completely. For each interview I ensured that each question had been or addressed so that I could compare the data collected in relation to data from other interviews. One of the outcomes of conducting the interviews in this way was the depth of data that each interview produced.

### **3.8 Data Collection**

In the first interview each career advisor discussed the different situations that affected the day to day provision of career advice in the school. The two questions that gave me a clear understanding of the day to day provision of career advice in the different schools, were the two most ambiguous, "Describe a typical day?" and "Anything I have missed out?". The answer to these questions helped position the different schools, their management systems and the school culture.

The second interview was structured around the photographs and each career advisor's explanation of the images they had taken and so there was no pre-set list of questions. Three of the career advisors had taken the photographs as a record of a day, and were very definite about the order in which they spoke about each image. They all started with the front office but from there the similarities stopped. The other two had a collection of images that represented different activities within the day and were not concerned with the order. Each person took between sixteen and twenty-four images. This directly affected the length of the interviews, which lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes.

The photographs also highlighted different aspects of the school. Each career advisor took a selection of images that they felt reflected the culture of the school and their interaction with students and staff in the school. Often photographs were taken of objects/situations that the career advisor had not mentioned previously in our first interview. One example was a photograph taken of the school chapel: in this school the students and the staff attend chapel every lunchtime, unless they have assembly, which they are also committed to attend. I considered this an important aspect of the culture of the school. The career advisor saw it as an opportunity to reflect on the day and enjoyed the experience. Another example is a photograph of two desks in the corridor outside the career advisors office, which were explained as "time out" desks for students who were not coping in the classroom environment. The career advisor said this gave them the opportunity to informally talk to such students about their behaviour and their options.

The photographs were also an opportunity for each career advisor to consider and reflect on their role as they were taking the photographs. Two of the career advisors discussed the fact that it is not often a person has the opportunity to think about and record their day to day work experience, and record these instances on film.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

I made a preliminary analysis of the data while transcribing each interview. Themes were recorded and notes taken concerning anything I felt might be relevant. The taped interviews I typed verbatim, as I did not want to lose any depth in interpretation. This involved many "yeahs" and "hahas" throughout the transcripts but also seemed to carry the voice of each career advisor. At the end of each interview I made a commitment to send the transcripts and photos back to each career advisor and check the transcripts, I also gave them the opportunity to have a copy of the final thesis document.

Each interview took an average of forty-five minutes, and resulted in up to twenty pages of final transcript. Not being a very fast or efficient typist, I took on average six hours to type each transcript. I was very tempted to get the interviews transcribed by someone who could type, but even though I do not enjoy the process I did gain a much deeper understanding of each interviewee and their role as a career advisor.

*Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read. Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses*

*direct the next phase of the data collection, which in turn leads to the refinement or reformation of one's questions* (Merriam, 1988, p 119).

Following the transcription, the scripts were sent back to each participant for checking and comments. None of the interviewees had experienced reading their own transcribed conversations previously and they were all surprised at how often they changed sentences mid way through. One career advisor crossed out all the "umms" I had included and changed some of the sentence structure. The other four made minor changes where I had mis-transcribed aspects of the conversation.

The career advisors were all happy to take photographs for the second interview but found that they needed more time than anticipated to do so. One of the five cameras did not work, after the career advisor had taken some of the shots. That person was happy to take the photographs again but this extended timing of the final interview another two weeks. I am passionate about the use of photographs as part of the interview process but it can be problematic with technical and time constraints.

Once the first interviews were finished and I had received from the interviewees their corrected transcripts I printed the transcripts, cut them up and taped them to the wall in eight different categories. These were based on the original ten questions, with two of the questions, "describe a typical day" and "anything I have missed out" incorporated into the other categories. I was then able to view

the categories and the cut up transcripts as a whole: thus I carried out analysis by inspection. The excerpts were coded with different coloured marker pens, (one per participant) which enabled each career advisor to be easily identified in each category.

I then printed a second copy of the transcripts and defined the regrouped display of the cut up categories under the following seven headings:

- Role of the career advisor in the school,
- Provision for career advice in the school,
- Aspects of the position that are enjoyed,
- Major issues,
- Training,
- A typical day,
- Career advice provision throughout the school.

Once the second interviews were finished I incorporated their transcripts and the photographs into the above seven categories. I was surrounded by the transcripts and could think about them, live with them and redefine the different categories that were developing. I could then compare the different groups of categories and make changes and further defined the findings of the study, developing the final categories while always having copies of the original ideas. This continued until I felt confident that it was time to write up the interpretation of the findings under the five following categories for the thesis:

- A typical day,

- NAG 1 (iv),
- Career Services,
- An effective career programme,
- Training and development.

These categories will form the framework used in Chapter Four, Presentation of the Data.

## **Chapter Four: Presentation of the Data**

### **4.1 Framework of the Categories**

The research questions were designed to gain an understanding of the day to day responsibilities of the role of the career advisor and how they dealt personally with providing career advice in the secondary school in which they worked. The interviews based on those questions produced much useful data. The data I collected is clustered under five different categories:

- A typical day,
- NAG 1 (iv),
- Career Services,
- An effective career programme,
- Training and development.

One of the interesting, and in hindsight, obvious categories to emerge from the research was the different ways in which each school structured its career advice. The National Administration Guidelines (NAG 1 iv) leave the responsibility to the school to decide how to meet the requirements for delivering career information and guidance (Ministry of Education, 1997). Different aspects of a school have an influence on how career advice is delivered within the school. These aspects can include the size of the school, school decile rating, Board of Trustees, Principal, teaching staff and students. For example, a small school will probably need to have a very different approach to the provision of career advice compared with a large school.



*A typical day* is the first category, which positions each of the career advisors in his/her school. As a theme it outlines the type of responsibilities that each career advisor participates in. These include other roles within the school as well as the responsibility of career advisor.

The second category *NAG 1(iv)*, has implications concerning the impact this policy has had on the provision of the career advice in each school. This includes the career advisors understanding of the NAG 1 (iv) and how it has impacted on their role in the school. Each of the five career advisors had different ideas about how the funding was utilised within the school. In two schools the principal managed this funding and the career advisor had no responsibility for this budget. In the three other schools the budget was the responsibility of the career advisor.

*Career Services*, the third category, offer different forms of provision for career information and guidance in secondary schools. On the whole these products and services are offered for a fee. It is at the discretion of the school to decide which products and services they will purchase as part of their delivery of career information and guidance advice in the school.

*An effective career programme*, is the fourth category, which describes the different types of provision each school offers. This could include provision from Year 7, career service material, videos, *Jiig-Cal*, *CareerQuest*, visiting Expos, visiting speakers and workbooks.

*Training and development* which is the fifth category refers to the provision for the career advisor to attend induction training, update days, conferences, and meetings.

## **4.2 A Typical Day**

The first category *a typical day* introduces the five career advisors and provides the setting in which they conduct careers advice in the school. I feel this is an important category because of the diverse nature of the five schools. It helps develop an understanding of the career advisor in the context of the role they play within the school. Each of the career advisors chose their own nom de plume, which resulted in the different use of titles, forenames and surnames. The names chosen by each career advisor seemed to me to reflect each person's personality.

### **4.2.1 Mr Kairn**

Mr Kairn is in the lucky position of being fully responsible for career advice in the school on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Tuesday and Thursday he coordinates career development which is part of the transition programme in the school. He has no teaching responsibilities, but is involved in class trips and in work experience as part of the transition programme.

*So I find them work places and I visit the work places and liaison with the employers. So it sort of dovetails into careers quite well. And I really enjoy it, it's great.*

Mr Kairn works from a career office centrally placed in the school. He has access to information sent to him by different tertiary providers, and a lap top computer.

The school has a suite of thirty computers for use by the students in the library. Mr Kairn has been involved in career advice within the school for thirty years. He is not happy with the move to have the *KiwiCareers* programme available electronically.

*Career Services, have their KiwiCareers programme and I find that virtually unworkable. If someone comes in and wants information on air hosting or work with animals maybe, in the old days, they're still behind you, those yellow labels and we used to be able to go over and get a slip or a leaflet from the careers information library, and handout those. And they were good.*

The structure of each day is dependent on the time of year. During term two, Mr Kairn interviews the two hundred Year 13 students in the school. Notes are kept on each student, which include the student's subject history, goals for the year, concerns the student has, plans they have for the next year and whether they have a curriculum vitae.

*So Year 13 go in the first part (of the year) and then latterly I've, in the last six weeks or so, I've been in the Year 12 classes. And just offered my services and kids who want to come and see me. I see every Year 13 student and just the Year 12 students who feel they needed it.*

Mr Kairn has an informal system where any student can ask to see him by leaving a slip in the box on his door asking for an appointment. He also organises an

extensive range of tertiary liaison officers to talk to the students during the year about the options that are available.

*This is the visitors' list here. AUT, local Polytechnic, Navy, Otago University, Army, Airforce, Victoria University, is coming tomorrow. Massey College of Education is coming on Wednesday. It's a marketing thing. Often I'm disappointed in the numbers (of students) that arrive to hear the speaker.*

#### **4.2.2 Beverly**

Beverly teaches career advice, for twelve, 50-minute periods per week. She is also the Assistant Principal. The school has a career room, which can accommodate up to ten students in a classroom setting. There are two computers, which have access to *CareerQuest* and *KiwiCareers*. Information is displayed on the walls and in files showing the different options that are available to students. Beverly has a separate office in which she conducts interviews, appointments, and keeps a copy of all the career information sent to the school. A secretary is based in the same building, who is responsible for assisting the transition teacher, but helps with general career advice administration when necessary.

Year ten students are introduced to the careers unit as part of their social studies curriculum. Beverly teaches these students in small groups for one period per term about the resources that are available and how to access them. The year eleven students all have individual interviews with a panel of staff before they

make their subject choices for the following year. The year twelve students have a stronger focus and experience the type of careers they are interested in.

*The sixth formers all have a module, which is five weeks of five periods and on Thursday afternoon, part of that is the double period they go to work. Plus there are individual kids choose to come to me for individual appointments. I don't go and harass them they have to want to come.*

The students organise the work experience themselves after they have had class sessions on how to approach an employer, telephone skills and personal presentation. Beverly visits at least 10 to 12 students per Thursday afternoon in the work place, and tries to visit each student twice over the five-week work placement.

Year 13 has the most intense career focus in the school. Beverly attends year 13 assemblies every Tuesday. This gives her direct access to communicate with the students and keep them informed of the different career opportunities that are available each week. The communication includes liaison visits to the school, off campus visits, application closing dates, and career evenings.

*There is so much mail that is coming into the school from tertiary places, assembly is a way to communicate what's coming in. There is so much that comes up. I say 90% of the year I am there giving out information, probably even more so this year.*

In the second half of the year Beverly is booked three or four weeks in advance with students who have made appointments to discuss their career options. In some cases students who are not happy with their mid year reports are looking at joining the local Polytechnic or youth training programmes. Students that intend to stay at school are starting to focus on their subject options for the following year.

*I have two students per period, unless I identify a real need for a whole period, often I'll say a half period is not enough. I'll make a whole period for them while they are here that's not very common, but some students need a heck of a lot of time.*

Administration is a time consuming task that Beverly usually completes outside school hours. Daily there is the mail from different providers, which often arrives by the box load. This has to be sorted and distributed in her office and the career room. Staff and students are also kept informed of the different information that has arrived. Files are kept on all the students who are interviewed, keeping track of the progress they are making. Employers also ring the school with permanent jobs that are available for students. Beverly advises them of the students who would be interested and suitable for these positions.

*Another thing that happens during the day is employers ring with employment...I do some of the sorting for them like an employment agency would and I sort out the best three that I think and do that for them, and send them off to the interview.*

#### 4.2.3 Isabel

Isabel is responsible for careers advice, and alongside this role she also teaches between 15 and 16 hours a week in economics. The school has a separate alternative education officer and a guidance counsellor, and the Seventh Form Dean is also responsible for the year 13 students. Isabel has an office that is in the student centre centrally located in the school. The alternative education officer and guidance counsellor also have offices in this building. There is a separate career room, which contains seating for eight students to work as a group, information is displayed in this room and along the corridors in the building. Computer access is available for *CareerQuest* and *KiwiCareers*. Isabel keeps a copy of all information in her office as well as in the career room.

Isabel gave a detailed description of the different responsibilities that could occur in one day by describing the previous Friday. She had three economics classes to teach and had meetings with four students who had made appointments. At 11.30 she was then required to discuss the options with a student who had been caught with cannabis.

*They wanted to suggest he leave rather than go through the formal expulsion. So I spent three quarters of an hour with him and his parents looking at the solutions, that was pretty fraught.*

Two high achieving students who could not manage their time required career direction and help with focusing on time management. Isabel then had a transition class, in which they watched the video *Once Were Warriors* and discussed the

implications of the movie. Following the movie Isabel had an interview with a student who was having difficulty managing his money, and assisted the student in developing different strategies. The last interview late that afternoon was with a student and his father discussing the different options for the future.

*And then I had a parent and a son, after school on the last day of term, that they'd picked up from the hostel so that's the sort of thing I get. I mean its good, it's a wonderful job and there is always a variety. Most kids go away from your office feeling reasonably happy.*

Isabel also has a wide range of career responsibilities, which were not covered on this particular Friday. Each year she surveys the year 12 students to ascertain the type of careers they are interested in pursuing. From this information a list is created of visiting speakers who come once a week to talk to the students in the school. She also takes students to career Expos and open days. Isabel keeps the staff at the school informed via a notice board in the staff room, which lists each day of the term, and the activity different students are participating in on each day.

*The term calendar, that's where, everything is written up in terms of whose visiting the school and who is going where. It is my job to make sure that at the beginning of each term the senior management know, for example if we are taking the students to University for the day, they have plenty of warning and don't set tests that day.*



#### 4.2.4 Anton Bott

Anton's official title is Head of Department Community Education. He is responsible for all off site learning, Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR), work experience and transition students. His teaching responsibilities include year nine social studies, health, word processing and he is teacher in charge of legal studies. Community classes are another responsibility. Anton is based in a large building, which houses an open plan area. The room is divided into two sections: the first is an informal space with lounge chairs and a coffee table with information from different providers available on shelves and in files. The other half of the room is set up as a classroom with groups of desks, and a white board. Music was often playing in this area during classes and in breaks.

For the first period of the day Anton teaches social studies, health or legal studies. The second period is officially designated for transition students. Anton uses an Australian programme called *Jiig-Cal* with students who are unsure of the type of career they are interested in.

*I don't know if you know Jiig-Cal, it's a three-stage programme that I put students through, these students who have no idea what they are doing. It comes up with forty options that they can look at. Each student gets a folder and then having gone through then they get to explore five particular jobs...that's basically three hours with every student...setting them up to do their own exploration and so on.*

Anton teaches the next two periods and has the last period to work on career advice with students. Transition students are those in year 12 and 13 who have not been successful in the school system but are still not equipped to find employment or further education. A separate programme is designed individually for each of these students. Anton has on average 10 to 12 of these students whom he is responsible for at any one time. The students sit practical Unit Standards, for example Communication English and Practical Maths, at the school. The remainder of their time is spent in the community.

*They do STAR courses, Monday afternoon they go to the Polytech gym, which is a fitness type thing. Wednesday morning they go to the local Polytech and do a range of creative stuff, pottery etc. Friday afternoon they go to automotive down here. Girls and some of the boys do Kiwi Host, self-grooming, they do basic hairdressing those kind of things. Then on Tuesdays and Thursdays they do work experience, which we negotiate.*

Anton has a total of three hours per week designated to provide career advice. Year 13 students continuing on to University are the responsibility of the Dean. Tertiary providers send information through to Anton who distributes it to the career room, Year 13 Dean, and the library.

*They don't send you one copy, that pile over there behind you is from Otago, why the hell do I want fifteen copies of Otago. They send boxes of it. I think time is the thing.*

Finding work experience for students is another time consuming administration role. Students work for two days a week for up to six weeks. Anton negotiates the placement for the student and visits each student on site. Learning support is the responsibility of another teacher but Anton does spend time with some of these students who find the career room a safe and inviting environment

*Except for my teaching there are one or two students working in here...Its sort of a time out place for some of them, a few kids who need time out away from teachers and so on so there is always something happening in here.*

#### **4.2.5 Claire**

Claire is the Head of Department for Home Science, a form teacher and she teaches vocational studies, tourism and health. Three and half-hours a week is officially allocated for her career advice role. Claire has an office in which she conducts interviews and keeps all the career information sent by tertiary providers.

The school has a staff meeting each morning, which is followed by form time. As a Year 13 form teacher, Claire feels this is an important time for her to communicate with the students and get the day started.

*This is the time when we get all the information and we give it to the students so that actually sets the school underway for the day too. To me it is an important part of what happens. I use that form time for notices a lot, for careers so it is a very important information sending out system.*

Claire teaches four or five lessons per day, the first period she tries to keep free for seeing students and opening the mail. The office is small and bookcases are full of information from different tertiary providers. The remainder of the morning Claire teaches home economics. At mid day the whole school attends Chapel, which is on the school grounds.

*It is only twenty minutes, actually fifteen minutes I suppose by the time we have lined up and got there. But it is very much a key feature of the school and a very photogenic place.*

During lunchtime Claire usually has career advice interviews with students. The afternoon is spent teaching. Claire is also the staff member on the Board of Trustees: its meetings are held in the afternoon after formal lessons have finished for the day. Meetings are not held every day but she is involved in Board activities that can take up a lot of time. Career advice is an important feature within the school, but tends to be planned around the other responsibilities Claire is involved in.

*For me careers are something that I have to keep wedging in and it happens on a slightly haphazard sort of set up. I do a lot of paper work here, and I have a lot of students here, but it tends to go in waves.*

Year 12 work on career issues as groups. They have access to the *KiwiCareers* programme and can make individual appointments if they still need assistance. They also travel as a group to the Coca-Cola Expo, and two Universities. Speakers are organised throughout the year from different tertiary organisations

to come and speak to the students. Year 13 students who are unsure of their destinations attend local Polytechnic courses once a week through the STAR programme.

*Close on 100% of our students go on to tertiary training every year...Some of them will go overseas for a year on a tutorship or something like that. Occasionally you will get one who will work for a year to earn some money. But the vast majority will go straight off to tertiary education, and those that don't in the first instance will eventually.*

#### **4.3 National Administration Guidelines**

The second category in this research relates to the understanding the different career advisors in each of the five secondary schools have of the NAG 1 (iv), and the ways in which it has affected the delivery of career advice in the schools. The National Education Guidelines (NEG) set out the regulatory framework for school leadership and management and signal the goals and directions of schooling at a national level. The National Administration Guidelines (NAG) form the National Education Guidelines. NAG 1 refers to achievement that provides the basis for success in further learning at school and in higher education and training. NAG 1 (iv) is the administration guideline that directly relates to career advice in secondary schools. (Ministry of Education, 1997) The Career Information and Guidance Scheme (CIGS) is the funding allocated by the Government for NAG 1 (iv).

There was often confusion between the two guidelines when the career advisors discussed how they were affected by NAG 1 (iv): they were all aware of the implications of their responsibilities to provide provision under NAG 1 (iv) but seemed unsure whether to call it the NEG or the NAG.

*We are mindful of part of the things I mentioned about the Maori students is to carry out the NEG? NAG? There are NEG's and NAG's aren't there? So it helps to fund our effort, and we are reminded those at risk students. (Mr Kairn).*

Apart from the confusion over the initials of the two guidelines each of the career advisors was very aware of the implications of the NAG 1 (iv) and the responsibility this placed on them in the school. The main focus of the career advice delivered in the schools was provision for students in year 12 and 13. With an emphasis on year 13 students, and students that had no planned destination when they left school.

*To assist schools meet this requirement (NAG 1 iv) an annual grant of \$3.5m has been allocated for providing career guidance for their students in years 9 and above. The rates of payment of this grant are based on a schools' decile ranking and in 2000 range from \$25.39 per student in decile 1 (lowest) school to \$9.85 per student in a decile 10 (highest) school (Speers, 2000, p 2).*

Not all the career advisors were happy with the implications of this responsibility:

*The latest one the students not achieving, I have it thrown back on me. And I've got to come back on to what I am doing. I keep a register of all the students I see, this is the evidence, not the result of the outcomes* (Anton Bolt).

Anton does not have responsibility for the CIGS funding and this is reflected in the above comment. He has limited resources yet is still responsible for assisting students who are thought to be at risk. Three of the career advisors have full responsibility for the funding allocated to career advice in the school, they decide on how the money is to be spent and which resources benefit the students. These career advisors were positive about their responsibility and the outcomes of the decisions they made.

*I get all the money, some careers departments don't get all the money. But my principal gives it all to me, and if I've got money left over from the year she is happy to have it back, you know what I don't use. I aim to spend the money on the kids and catering for the majority* (Beverly).

One career advisor was under the impression that the CIGS funding was allocated to pay their wages. However funding is allocated to pay for resources, and salaries are drawn from staffing budgets, not CIGS funding. The Principal makes the decisions in the school about how the funding is allocated in consultation with the Board of Trustees. It is their decision whether to pass this responsibility on to the career advisor. One of the two career advisors who did not have responsibility for the funding was not concerned and felt he was given adequate provision to

fulfil his position. The other career advisor was frustrated with the lack of resources he had available to provide adequate career advice for students.

*I don't even have a telephone. I'm way over here and I don't have a phone.*

*I've asked for an Internet connection, other classes have Internet connections and so on. If I had Internet I could actually take kids into KiwiCareers. I have got four computers but they are of little value because I can't actually hook them on (Anton Bolt).*

The five career advisors all commented that the NAG 1 (iv) had affected their roles because of the extra amount of paper work they now had to complete. They felt that there was a much stronger emphasis on being accountable to the Board of Trustees, school management team, parents and students. This gave the position of career advisor higher status in the school and greater job satisfaction for the career advisors.

*I am much more aware of whom I am targeting and what I am targeting. it has also made the outside providers more accountable. They want to see our Maori students, which is interesting. It has given the school more of a profile, and its no longer a job where you stick the old lady with the fluffy slippers who is no longer coping in the classroom (Isabel).*

None of the career advisors mentioned the *Career Information and Guidance in New Zealand Secondary Schools*, or *The Secondary School Student* reports as resources that they had referred to in developing career advice in the school. They



all utilised Career Services at different levels, as part of their provision for career advice in the school.

#### **4.4 Career Services**

The main services used by the career advisors from Career Services are the *KiwiCareers* website, the *CareerQuest* programme and the *Jobs Galore* and *Courses Galore* reference books. One career advisor used the student workbooks as a resource but the other four career advisors thought these were an expensive investment, which needed to be replaced yearly.

*That money goes towards buying workbooks, for all the fourth form (year ten) to do, to help them with their careers thing. It buys the workbooks for the 6th form (year twelve) vocational studies class, a different type of work book and a 7th form (year thirteen) one, this year is a more expensive one, it's a smaller class and its better quality (Beverly).*

Beverly had full responsibility for the career advice funding. She organised parents evenings three times a year through Career Services. The four other schools provided similar parent evenings, which they organised independently. The general theme when career advisors were discussing Career Services was the cost of the services and products that they offered.

*Things have changed it's not that they are being difficult (Career Services) you know it's just what is, how things are done now. We have to pay for that if we want them to come and do something for the students, so*

*it doesn't really work out, we are better to spend the money doing things with students (Claire).*

Career Services see themselves as the leading provider and promoter of career information and guidance in New Zealand (Careers Service, 2000). However the five career advisors I interviewed do not utilise Career Services other than at a very minimal level. They all agreed that Career Services were beneficial, but because of the costs involved tended to spend their budget on other resources.

*Career Services probably has less influence than they used to. Now they sell most of their services to schools so you have to go and buy something, then you tend to make sure you really need it before you buy it (Mr Kairn).*

Career advisors also felt that they were able to advise the students on a much more practical level than Career Services because they know the students.

*There are a lot of people out there that know we have the money, and they want us to buy stuff off them. Career Services want to come in and interview the students and do career plans for them, but they can never get to know the students like I do, over a half-hour session. (Isabel)*

The relationship that each career advisor had developed with the students was seen as an important aspect of providing career advice in the school. This factor and the cost of Career Services were the two reasons why the five career advisors

choose to organise and deliver the bulk of the career information and guidance to the students themselves.

#### **4.5 Career Advice in Schools**

In all five schools career advice was introduced to the students at years 9 and 10. This was provided as part of the health or social studies syllabus. In one school the health/social studies teacher was also the career advisor. Another school sent the year 10 students to the career centre for one period a term to work with the career advisor who introduced them to the resources available.

*I do see all the fourth form (year 10), I make sure I do that for a reason so they know who I am. The third form (year 9) does miss out on that, but I actually have an evening for third form parents so I target them first, but then the turnout for that evening is nothing marvellous, so I guess I don't target them till the fourth form (Beverly).*

Only one career advisor had provision for career advice as a concise overall strategy that developed as the students progressed through the school. The programme started in year nine, introducing the students to the skills and interests they had which they could develop into career options. In years 10 and 11 the students learnt about the options available to them through tertiary education and the work force.

*In sixth form (year 12) they actually see the reality, I try and get them to a Polytechnic, University, Career Expo and have a lot of speakers come in to them, that sort of thing. Seventh form (year 13) we are really starting to*

*pinpoint exactly the things they need to do to get where they are going. So that's the sort of path they take (Claire).*

The main focus in the four other schools was on students in years 12 and 13, rather than a whole school programme. Career advisors found that the expectations of the students even in year 11 could be fairly unrealistic.

*In the fifth form and the sixth (year 11 and 12) the students don't seem to be able to comprehend that they need to start thinking about working in the future. They are so concerned with the day to day dramas of school and what they are doing in the weekend that career advice programmes seem a waste time in their minds (Claire).*

In each school the bulk of the career advisor's time was spent with the year 13 students, who were interviewed or filled out forms concerning their destinations for the following year. From this information the career advisor would target students they felt could be at risk of unemployment when they left school.

*There are a number of students who have no idea what they want to do, they fill in the form and come for an interview and have nothing to say. It is like they have no understanding of what the next step after secondary school will be for them. These are the students I need to talk to. (Anton Bott)*

Each school offered transition options for the students who were targeted as "at risk". This involved the incorporation of work experience or training as part of

the school day. In three schools this role was performed by the career advisor who was allocated extra time to support the students. The Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) funding was usually incorporated into the transition programme and utilised by students as part of their career development.

*Under the STAR-funding programme we have a number of kids doing a catering course at the Polytechnic. They do two days a week in the first half of the year and then after that I find them a position in town in a restaurant or hotel and they do their two days work experience, so they get industry experience. Many of them will apply for the full time course next year (Mr Kairn).*

All five of the career advisors saw their jobs as worthwhile and making a difference in the school. They were all passionate about the career advice they offered, the procedures they had developed and the positive results they saw in the students they worked with, even if they did not cover all areas as required by the Ministry of Education (1995).

#### **4.6 Professional Development and Training**

Category five provides an interesting insight into the support and professional development that is available and used by secondary school career advisors. Each of the five career advisors was trained as a secondary school teacher majoring in the subject area in which they taught. None of the career advisors had formal qualifications in the field of career advice. The career service offers two-day induction sessions/courses for all school staff who are involved in career advice.

During the year they also offer three update days. The career service describe these days as:

*Extensive training and advice given in the interpretation and application of career information to staff of state secondary schools (Careers Services, 2000, p 12).*

The career advisors had a somewhat different interpretation of the update days and tended to be unsure of the benefit of attending.

*I got two days at the beginning of the year, which was actually a bit ho hum. I didn't go last term, because it was all sort of (name of another town) orientated and I didn't really want to go round all those places that they were going to visit, in another town (Anton Bott).*

The biggest resource used by career advisors was the open days held by tertiary institutes in which update seminars were held for the teachers and career advisors. These were seen as beneficial in outlining the qualifications that could be obtained at each institution. For this form of professional development to be successful, it is reliant on the career advisor attending a range of open days at different institutions, which was not always the case.

*They all have some sort of careers advisors day, I would imagine all of them do, and you just can't go to all of them. Because I haven't got time, so I go to the local ones. Our students go all over New Zealand to train, so you know I'd love to go to all of them I just haven't got time (Claire).*

The tertiary providers also attend the schools and send material about their courses, which is another way in which career advisors gain information. This ad hoc system of gaining professional training was the most common among all five of the career advisors.

One career advisor had attended the Careers in Transition Association Conference and found this a stimulating and exciting experience.

*There are some really good conferences, the career in transition association conference. I went to one last year it was the best conference I've ever been to. It was fantastic (Beverly).*

None of the other career advisors had attended this conference. Claire is the Vice President of the Career Practitioners Association (CPA) which is an organisation for people involved in career practice generally, not only secondary schools. Like Beverly, Claire found the experience at CPA to be very beneficial for her work in secondary schools.

*I've been involved with that since its conception, which is about six years ago... I find it really good because its given me a much broader outlook into the role of careers people and a lot of issues and what's available that sort of thing, so its very good (Claire).*

Both these career advisors felt that the advantages gained from being part of these two bodies far outweighed the amount of time they involved. The other career advisors cited lack of time as their reason for not belonging to either of these

associations. There was concern among the five career advisors at the lack of training and development that was available. Areas such as listening and counselling skills, skills for motivating students and training in managing information were all aspects that the career advisors thought would be useful. None of the career advisors thought that these areas were addressed at the Career Services update days.

#### **4.7 Summing Up**

Each of the five categories describes different aspects of the role the five career advisors play in the delivery of career information and guidance in New Zealand secondary schools. The first category *a typical day* shows how each career advisor structures the delivery of career advice in the school. *The National Administration Guideline* for the delivery of career information and guidance is the topic of the second chapter, which outlines how the career advisors follow the guideline in each school. *Career Services* offer resources and products to secondary schools. The five career advisors I interviewed felt Career Services were expensive and did not know the students well enough to offer the same level of advice as they could. Each career advisor had developed a programme in which they taught career information and guidance, but only one career advice programme started in year nine, the other *career advice in schools* was focused on Years 12 and 13. Generally the schools concentrated their programmes on year 13, the last year of school for most students. In the final section the career advisors explain the type of *training and development* that is available to them. Only two of the career advisors belong to career advice organisations, although



they had all attended the Career Services update days. None of them felt that they were particularly informative or beneficial to the work they did. In the next chapter I will draw conclusions from the data that I have collected and discuss the implications of the material.

## **Chapter Five: Interpretation of the Data**

The research question, "Is career advice in secondary schools working?" was addressed in relation to five career advisors telling their stories about the provision of career advice in five different secondary schools. Five main categories of data emerged from the research: a typical day, NAG 1 (iv), Career Services, an effective career programme, and training and development. In this chapter interpreting the data, material from the first category is integrated with the other four rather than treated separately. The *role of the career advisor* in each school is the first topic followed by *decision making and career advice* in secondary schools which looks at the role of management and career advice provision. *Time* is a factor of concern for most career advisors and the use of time is outlined in this section. Each school has different ways in which they offer *career advice provision* this is the last topic followed by the *conclusion*.

### **5.1 The Role of the Career Advisor**

Each of the career advisors had different methods of approaching their career advice role in the school. This made it difficult to gain one unified picture of the role that each of the five career advisors had in the school. Over the two interviews and when discussing the photographs extra responsibilities were added as the career advisor remembered/photographed yet another function they performed. This has been highlighted in other research in New Zealand (Holmes, 1996. Sutton, 1997. McIntyre, 1998) that found there is no clear definition for the role of career advisor in New Zealand secondary schools.

Career education, career guidance and career counselling were all mentioned as elements that the five career advisors had responsibility for in their roles within the school. None of the career advisors separated these roles, interactions and programmes were all considered as aspects of day to day career advice provision. A feature of the different approaches to career advice in the schools is that they are a series of one off events, which directly relate to the situation happening at the time.

*There seems to be a sub-text of providing career advice programmes on an ad hoc basis, perhaps without any overall planning or strategy... All too often we find that a school does not have a plan to which it is working.*  
(Speers, 2000, p 3).

Career education deals with planned programmes of learning focusing on the development of career knowledge, skills and attitudes (Ministry of Education, 1997). The Career Services workbooks are an example of career education used by career advisors in schools. Career guidance helps students move from a general understanding of the career they are interested in pursuing, to a specific understanding of realistic options. *CareerQuest*, *KiwiCareers* and *Jiig-Cal* programmes are designed to fulfil this objective and were used in one form or another by all five career advisors. Students who have no idea about realistic career decisions go to the career advisor for career counselling in schools. This includes one-on-one interviews and students working directly with the career advisor. All five schools conducted interviews with these students who were labelled “at risk”.

*In sixth form (year 12) they actually see the reality, I try and get them to a Polytechnic, University, Career EXPO and have a lot of speakers come in to them, that sort of thing. Seventh form (year 13) we are really starting to pin point exactly the things they need to do to get where they are going. So that's the sort of path they take (Claire).*

Four of the five career advisors mentioned that other staff including Deans, transition teachers, STAR co-ordinators and guidance counsellors all participated in aspects of provision for career information and guidance at different levels in the school. There was evidence of a blurred line between which role each person held, with the career advisor often participating in different roles as the need occurred. Miller et al (1993) and Holmes (1996) have promoted this as existing in the schools they studied, with the career advisor continually overwhelmed by the multiplicity of their roles in the school (Holmes, 1996).

Lack of staff qualifications and training in the area of career advice provision in secondary schools has an impact on the way career advice is delivered. Advisors do not feel that they have many options, which are relevant to further train and up skill in the different areas they are working in. Training could help clarify and strengthen the advisors' perceptions of their role and give the career advisors' insight into the most beneficial ways in which to advise and assist students.

The career advisors in my research and career advisors across New Zealand (Holmes, 1996, Sutton, 1997 and McIntyre, 1998) have many different roles in

the school. Byrne and Beavers (1993) comment that there is a need to recognise “the need” as well as “the demand” for career information and guidance in secondary schools. At present with the low allocation of hours directed at career advice in secondary schools and the lack of training available for the career advisor. Career advisors’ find they are working to meet the demand of mainly year 13 students who have to make decisions about their post secondary destinations as it is their last year at secondary school.

## **5.2 Decision Making and Career Advice in Secondary Schools**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that the NAG 1 (iv) is adhered to. The board's role is primarily one of oversight, developing and monitoring the implementation of career information and guidance policy in collaboration with the Principal and other interested parties (Career Information and Guidance in New Zealand Schools, 1997). All five career advisors wrote reports on individual students and then final reports, which were submitted at the end of the year to the Principal and the Board of Trustees.

The leadership for career information and guidance provision is the responsibility of the Principal who allocates salaried teacher time to provide career advice in each school. The CIGS funding is for the provision of products and resources to assist the delivery of career information and guidance and not allocated to fund the teacher/career advisor's time to deliver career advice. This puts the Principal in the situation where they have first to allocate hours to teaching in the

classroom, before they allocate hours for provision outside traditional classroom areas.

*Basically it's left up to the Principals to allocate hours for career advice, well you can't blame Principals they have to get people in front of the class room so they will take every teacher time they have got to get them in front of the classroom (Claire).*

Administration was seen by the career advisors as one area that the Principal could employ non-teaching staff to complete career administration tasks such as opening and distributing career information, organising tertiary visits to the school and organising work placement for the students.

*There is so much that could be done by someone who doesn't have to be a teacher, right. You are employing a very expensive office person. I mean someone who isn't a teacher could open the mail and so on, they could do the preparation for the newsletter (Anton Bolt).*

In the *Report of the Career Information and Guidance Review Panel* in 1995 and follow up reports on the *Implementation of the Career Information and Guidance Policy in Schools: Baseline Study 1997 and The Follow-Study in 1998*, career advisors felt that they were better meeting the needs of students than in the past. Gaps which were commonly identified in this research by the career advisors in the 1998 follow-up study include: lack of time, the need for further development of programmes aimed at junior students, lack of space and lack of student motivation (Wilson and Young, 1998). I would also consider the absence of

written planning and procedures as having a detrimental effect on all the above situations, which directly relate to management systems and the effectiveness of career information and guidance provision in secondary schools.

None of the five career advisors discussed a written school policy plan that was developed with the support of the Principal or other staff in the school. The planning of career advice was the responsibility of the career advisor who used the resources and time they had to the best of their capabilities. Anton Bott describes a typical example of the lack of communication that can exist in some schools concerning career information and guidance.

*The Principal said to me at the beginning of last term, "I want you to interview all the year thirteen students". I said for what reason, he said he wanted to know what they are doing. I said I already knew that. The seventh form dean had done it in the first term. We had already identified the seventh formers at risk. (Anton Bott).*

At the *Career Planning, Signposting the Future* conference held in 1997, David Lythe and Ruth Moorhouse presented a paper in which they discussed the changes which would need to be addressed in today's secondary schools for the provision of career information and guidance to be effective.

*It will not be sufficient to provide information and advice and guidance to students if the school is not providing them with the fullest range of opportunities and pathways as possible. How the school decision-makers, make the choice between the competing curricula options could be as*

*important as the choices made by individual learners. This may require quite a switch in attitudes for students, teachers and administrators alike. In practice Careers Education has often been treated as a peripheral, marginal subject* (Lythe and Moorhouse, 1997, p 90).

The career advisors need the support of the whole school body, including the Board of Trustees, the Principal, teaching and administration staff backed by policy and planning to address the career information and guidance needs of today's secondary schools.

### **5.3 Career Advice in Secondary Schools and the Issue of Time**

The issue of time is a complex and confusing one, which is often clouded by other barriers in the school. Indications in all five schools were that a coordinated and well-integrated service was the target for future development rather than what was actually taking place in the school at present. Only one career advisor was confident in the time allocation they had for career information and guidance.

Mr Kairn had no teaching responsibilities and spent three days per week working as the career advisor in the school and two days per week as the transition coordinator, for a total of fifteen hours per week. He was pleased with this time allocation and felt it enabled him to complete the two roles without getting too behind on the paperwork. In contradiction to this and the NAG 1(iv) Mr Kairn worked with only year 12 and 13 students, when in theory all years in the school should have access to the career advisor.



*So up until now um I'm really seeing just sixth and seventh from (year 12 and 13) Half way through this term I was seeing seventh formers almost exclusively. I will see anybody who puts a slip in the box... I see every seventh former and just the sixth formers who feel they needed it (Mr Kairn).*

In other years the students are introduced to the concepts of career advice through the Health classes which are taught by another teacher. Mr Kairn admitted that the school had no clear pathway for the provision of career information and guidance in all years of the school.

*Because we are in such a state of change at the moment, School Cert. giving way to NCEA, nobody is quite sure how you are going to progress from one level to the next (Mr Kairn).*

This indicates that either there is no planned provision for all year groups in the school or that Mr Kairn is unaware that such a plan exists. This may highlight existing barriers in the organisational climate of the school rather than a lack of time to provide career advice at all levels of the school. The implication is that school staff who work with the students in the area of career advice do so individually without consulting each other, and it is not until the student is about to leave the school that focused career information and guidance, is available through the career advisor.

The other four career advisors all commented on the lack of time available and mentioned areas in the school, that were not supportive of the provision of career information and guidance to the students. They felt this hindered career provision in two main areas; teaching staff unwilling to let students leave class to attend open days, STAR and transition programmes and staff advising students on different options that were undefined and could be out of date. These two issues impacted on the time and support career advisors have to offer career information and guidance to students.

Of central concern is how the career advisor uses the time they do have available within the school. In many cases career advisors are acting on the demand for their time as and when students require it. The requirements of students in the senior school are rapidly changing with the introduction of multi-level study, school-industry links and the longer retention of students for longer in the school. As a result the junior school students simply miss out or have limited access through Health and Social Studies curricula to career advice provision.

*Everybody can self refer, third to seventh form their parents as well. The fourth form they do social studies and there is a two week unit in that, fifth form there is a transition class for second year fifths and sixth formers get an interview of sorts. I can't really get through them all (Isabel).*

Miller et al (1993) pointed out that development in guidance and counselling in secondary schools has not kept up with the increased number and diversity of needs at senior level. I also believe that if students in junior school began in year

nine to understand the implications of the choices that are available to them they would be better prepared once they reached senior school. This would need to be more than the random method used by many schools (Holmes, 1996, Sutton, 1997 and McIntyre, 1998) of incorporating career advice into curricula such as Health and Social Studies. But this expansion would also have time implications for the career advisors. Often it is expected that teachers provide a comprehensive introduction to career information and guidance when they have no background or training in this area.

*Career information and guidance should be available to all students, because it empowers young people by encouraging them to take responsibility for their own personal development. The roles and responsibilities of the school should be clearly recognised as impartial, confidential and based on the students needs. Any career information given must be accurate, comprehensive, reliable, appropriate, and up to date (Ministry of Education, 1997, p 19).*

The Ministry of Education has been clear in stating the different roles and responsibilities required in secondary schools for the provision of career information and guidance. Yet the interviews show that the time to carry out these roles and the people responsible for the different roles are not clearly defined in many schools. For career advice provision to be effective, the whole school staff need to be involved as a team, rather than just a few people in the school fitting these responsibilities into their already busy timetables.

*For me careers are something that I have to keep wedging in and it happens on a slightly haphazard sort of set up. I do a lot of paper work here, and I have a lot of students here, but it tends to go in waves (Claire).*

The issue of time also impacts on the professional development and training of career advisors and staff who are involved in career advice throughout the school. Career Services update days were not seen as providing the depth of professional development that was required by the school. Often the time to attend these courses was considered wasted because of the venue and content of the update days. Three career advisors felt that they did not have the time to attend career conferences. The two career advisors who did attend different career events thought they were immensely beneficial. This indicates a crisis management approach that is seen in many secondary schools who provide career information and guidance. The staff have no time to reflect and consider the environment in which they are working with other practitioners and make changes and improvements to the career advice they offer in the school.

#### **5.4 Career Advice Provision in Secondary Schools**

Two of the schools had student centres in which the career advisor, transition teacher, STAR coordinator and in one case the guidance counsellor were based. The career advisors thought this worked well for the students in the school. Two other schools had career advice centres where the career advisor was based. In one of these schools Anton Bott had developed an informal atmosphere in which

students felt comfortable listening to music and generally relaxing in the career advice lounge.

One area to which all the career advisors had input, though this seemed to be very much on an arbitrary basis, was that of “at risk” students, which schools are defined as being responsible for in the National Guidelines. The definition of this term did differ among the five schools. In one school the career advisor did not like the term ‘at risk’ as she felt it was not the lower achieving students that were necessarily the students that should be her focus. Her concern was the students who usually did well but for personal reasons had stopped doing so. Her school is a high decile school with a small roll: the focus in the lower decile schools with larger student numbers was quite different. Two types of “at risk” students were prevalent in these schools. The main profile for a student falling into this category was one who was unmotivated, did not succeed in the school system, and seemed destined not to succeed in the post secondary school environment.

*The ones I know are at risk, just one thing that I can try and improve their marketability, there are students out there, it worries me that they are not very? And they could be unemployed forever. The Government has put pressure on us to help kids at risk. Yes I happy to do that but how do I get them to help themselves too. Possibly their dysfunctional backgrounds, but they have to want to do it themselves (Beverly).*

These students do not “fit” into the school system, but cannot leave until they are 16. The transition class is one option that schools have used to motivate these

students through STAR programmes and work experience. The other category of “at risk” students includes those who have been asked to leave the school, usually for possession of illegal substances.

The main focus in all the schools was with year 13 and “at risk” students. The focus on this small number of students in the school meant that year 9 to year 12 students had very limited exposure to career advice unless they were in trouble and deemed “at risk”. This according to the career advisors I interviewed is relative to the resources that they felt they had available. To a certain extent the career advisors are providing career services to the students who need it immediately as they are leaving the school, without ever addressing the career advice needs of the other students in any great depth. This perpetuates the situation and, without changes to the procedures the career advisors are using in year 9 through to year 12, students’ career education will not change. Regardless of what the Ministry of Education (1997) recommends for career information and guidance in all areas of the secondary school, I conclude that the schools need to change the systems they are using and address the lack of career information and guidance found in years 9 to 12.

### **5.5 Some Key Issues from Interpretation of the Data**

The five career advisors in this study were passionate about the roles they had in their schools and felt they were making a difference to the students that they worked with.

*I mean the job's good, it's a wonderful job and there is always a variety.  
Most kids go away from your office feeling reasonably happy (Isabel).*

Not surprisingly lack of training, lack of staff support and lack of time were the three most formidable barriers that each career advisor faced in providing career information and guidance in the school. They all felt to a certain degree that, because of these factors, not all students got the support and information they needed, especially students in years 9 -12, who needed to start focusing on the different career choices that could interest them in the future.

In the New Zealand Council for Educational Research publication, *Final year school students' experiences of the transition to tertiary study or employment* (2001), one of the recommendations was:

*Activities that identify students' interests, strengths, and skills should be an earlier and continuous priority of career information and guidance programmes. In this study, students' personal interests were found to be the main motivator behind their career decisions (Boyd, Chalmers and Kumekawa, 2001, p 39).*

This indicates, as did the advisors I interviewed, that the earlier students become aware of their interests and strengths, the earlier they can start beginning to understand how they can use these different interests and skills to develop a post-secondary pathway.

The role of career advice in New Zealand secondary schools has progressed a long way in the last ten years. Technology has ensured that career advice is now multi-faceted. Career Advisors are working hard to keep up with these changes, and are positive about the role they now play in the school assisting students planning their future post secondary destinations. The career advisors all felt that there should be changes to different aspects of career information and guidance, the main factors being the allocation of time and support.



## **Chapter Six: Conclusions**

### **6.1 Summary of the Findings and Interpretation**

Career advice in New Zealand secondary schools is a complex and often a poorly defined area of learning for students. I have described the ways in which five career advisors offer career information and guidance to their students. For each of the five career advisors the conditions in which they provided career advice were very similar and affected the provision of career advice they were offering in the school.

The complexity in defining the roles the career advisors have in the school is based on the increased number and diversity of the needs of the students, especially in the senior school. The introduction of multi-level study, school-industry links and the retention of students for longer in the school are all factors affecting the work of the career advisors. With the range of positions each career advisor has to fulfil, each day is quite different from the next. This is the reality of the changing environment in today's secondary schools and was evident in the experiences of these career advisors.

Each career advisor is aware of the need for students who have been identified by the school as being at risk of leaving school unprepared for the transition to the workplace or further education/training (Ministry of Education, 1997), to gain further support and career information and guidance. The recent New Zealand Council for Education Research study, *Beyond School: Final year school students' experiences of the transition to tertiary study or employment* concluded

that it was important for students to have a clear picture of their goals on leaving school. Students with clear goals are more focused and successful in obtaining employment or post secondary education than those who are unsure of their destination (Boyd, et al, 2001).

One of the areas that was seen as a weakness in the each of the five schools was provision for students from year 9. The five schools introduced career advice through the Health or the Social Studies curriculum in years 9 and 10.

*There is a framework for addressing this part of the curriculum through the current health education syllabus. Health education is not generally taken seriously as an area of learning. (ERO, 1998, p 11).*

Teachers other than the career advisor taught these subjects in three of the five schools, and it is debatable what experience or background in career advice those teachers have to offer as part of this curriculum. This is a weak area in the five schools and relates directly to the necessity for policy, planning and procedures to be developed by the Board of Trustees, Principal, senior management teams and staff in each school. If these policies have been developed then career advisors I interviewed need to be a lot better informed about their existence.

Four of the career advisors felt that students were not equipped to decide in years 9, 10 and 11 on the type of career that they might consider. Research (Ministry of Education, 1995, 1997. Boyd et al, 2001) recommends that students need to begin thinking about their destinations when they enter school in year 9. Four of the

career advisors, based on their career provision experiences in the school, do not follow this recommendation. The question for these career advisors might be: what do students need to learn to begin to understand the importance of career information and guidance in year 9?

Career advisors felt they were providing better provision for the students by spending the CIGS funding on school trips to tertiary campuses and Expo's, rather than paying Career Services staff to talk to and interview students. The schools are funded by the Ministry of Education (1995, 1997, and 2000) to buy different career services to support career advisors in the provision of career information and guidance to the students. It would seem logical for the career advisors to buy services and resources from providers like Career Services to give them more time to adequately provide career information and guidance in the school. However the five career advisors I interviewed did not often use the services because they thought they were too expensive, even though they personally did not have enough time to offer career information and guidance to all year groups as stipulated and funded by the Ministry of Education. This raises the question: is the Ministry of Education offering enough funding? Or are the schools using the CIGS funding for career information and guidance?

All the career advisors felt they ran effective career information and guidance programmes within their schools. They were aware of the limited access for students in years 9 and 10, but on the whole felt the students weren't ready at this age to fully understand the implications of post-secondary destinations.

*Kids are only really willing to take it on board when they are ready for it, that's why we target the senior kids, they are beginning to think about these things (Beverly).*

They were all working increasingly with students at risk and felt that tertiary liaison staff now had a stronger focus on informing Maori and Pacific Island students of their career options. One area of concern, for all of the career advisors, was the lack of policy, goals and planning within each of the schools. One school had a general plan for each year group, but generally career information and guidance in the schools seemed to be mapped out independently by the career advisor who informed the school about areas that would affect student participation in formal classes. The policy outlined in the *Career Information and Guidance in New Zealand Schools* publication (1997) states:

*A policy will ensure a co-ordinated approach, involving all key players, and stimulate a commitment to continually improving career information and guidance programmes. A CIGS policy acts as an agenda for action and provides a baseline against which to measure performance (Ministry of Education, 1997, p 16).*

In 2001 the career advisors I interviewed did not have a formalised policy or set goals for the provision of career information and guidance to their students. ERO (1998) judged that only 50% of the schools reported on provided career information and guidance at all levels of the school and only 30% targeted students at risk of unemployment, and 56% of schools were deemed as offering a good quality of career advice provision. Four schools in this present research

offered career information and guidance at all levels of the school, but this could be for as little as one period in year 10, or delivered by untrained staff for a few periods in Year 11. None of the five career advisors discussed formal policy or planning in relation to career advice provision.

Training and professional development is considered important by career advisors (Holmes, 1996. Watts et al, 1996, Sutton, 1998. McIntyre, 1998) but unfortunately the five career advisors I talked to did not feel that there were a great many options available for them to gain careers-related training and development. The Career Services training days were not greatly supported because they often had a focus on areas not relevant to the career advice they offered. Organisations such as the Career Practitioners Association and the Transition Association were however seen as viable venues for gaining information and training by each of the career advisors who belonged to them.

## **6.2 Limitations of the Research**

The limitations of this study relate to the small focus on only five career advisors and the perceptions and experiences of this group. Other research (Miller et al, 1993; Holmes, 1996. Sutton, 1997; Wilson and Young, 1998; McIntyre, 1998) conducted in New Zealand found similar outcomes concerning time, professional development and training. These themes have been prominent in research conducted in New Zealand, which still has a 'grassroots' reactive approach in many schools for the provision of career information and guidance.

This study was conducted in five very different schools, ranging from small to reasonably large rolls, high to low decile and single sex and mixed sex schools. These differences could be seen as limitations or strengths in that I was developing interpretive themes when in some cases the only common factor was that they were all secondary schools. The schools were chosen for practical considerations, which included geographical location and agreement to participate, researcher's time, and accessibility to the career advisors. A broader focus in future research at a nationwide level would identify whether these findings are local or national considerations.

This study was conducted in the middle of the school year and the research findings might have been different if the research was at the end of the year or the beginning of the year. The career advisors at the beginning of the year would presumably have a less stressful workload than those at the end of the year. I chose the middle of the year because it fitted in well with the career advisor timetables and gave me time to write up the thesis.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

It would be beneficial to interview the Boards of Trustees, Principals and the management teams in the five schools. This would clarify the role of the career advisor in the school from a wider perspective. In this thesis I was concerned with the career advisors' own stories, but in future research it would be interesting to

consider the differences concerning how career information and guidance was perceived in the school by the management teams.

Interviewing year nine, ten and eleven students to see how well they had been catered for in the provision of career information and guidance would assist in gaining an understanding of how provision at these ages is being taught and also if it is perceived as a valuable resource. This would address the gap between past research and the career advisor perceptions of students' understanding and wanting to learn about their career destinations at this age.

Future research is recommended that will investigate why Career Services products and services are not used more by the secondary schools. It would be interesting to hear how Career Services feel they relate to secondary school clients. Their annual report (Career Services, 2000), is a glowing document that outlines many of the positive initiatives they have achieved. The career advisors I interviewed seemed concerned only with the cost of the services, and not the range of different services and products that could be used. There seemed to be a gap between what the career advisors feel would be of benefit to the provision of career information and guidance and what Career Services offered.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for Career Advisors**

The closest analogy I can find is the quilt mentioned in chapter one. Pieces of fabric are found in many different places and stitched together. Each of the career advisors is collecting career information and guidance tools and providing them for their students. When quilting you can choose the fabrics that you feel

complement each other at the time and stitch them together. Many quiltmakers before they start collecting fabric have a pattern in mind, a design that they follow as they collect and stitch the fabric to make the quilt. The first quilt haphazardly made could still be a beautiful quilt, but until it is finished the outcomes are uncertain.

My recommendation to the career advisors is that to offer careers advice in the school a plan is needed, as for a designed quilt, which outlines the policy for career information and guidance in the school and all the many parts of the "fabric". I am not saying that without a plan the results are not necessarily unsuccessful: sometimes they are, but sometimes time runs out, especially for at risk students. Often more support and resources are needed to offer an integrated career information and guidance service throughout the school.

Byrne and Beavers (1991) developed definitions for career assistance in Australian schools. They were subsequently adopted by the New Zealand review team (CIGRP, 1995) to encourage consistency in ensuing policy, research and practice in New Zealand (McIntyre, 1998). The Ministry of Education publication (1997) outlined the importance of career information and guidance in secondary schools and provided guidelines in implementing policy, goals and planning. The five career advisors I interviewed based their practice on events as they occurred, rather than planning events with the support of the school management team and teachers, to meet the requirements of students.



## 6.5 Conclusion

The research question was “Is career advice in New Zealand schools working?” From the perspective of the career advisors it cannot be answered in simple yes or no terms. The five career advisors in this study show a high level of commitment and passion for their role in the school providing career information and guidance. They are professional in their approach and have developed programmes that reflect many of the students’ needs. One factor that connected them all was the amount of work they had to complete and the lack of time there was to do so. The demands from the different areas that they each work in were seen as a negative aspect of the position because they never had enough time to complete them with ease. In contrast this was also seen as a positive aspect, in that the job had a great deal of variety and they were not just sitting in classrooms teaching, but were also out in the community with the students.

The lack of time reflects, I feel, a larger situation and is the biggest problem for the career advisors and the schools in which they work. There is a need for an integrated career information and guidance policy developed to ensure that students receive planned progressive, ongoing programmes at every level of the school. *Career Information and Guidance in New Zealand Schools* (1997) outlines the different areas in which schools need to develop comprehensive programmes. Career Services have also developed resources supporting schools in this area.

*Some of the work, which our organisation (Career Services) has done in recent years with schools, has been aimed at supporting them in building a cohesive approach to career education, information and guidance* (Speers, 2000, p 7).

For career information and guidance to be respected, integrated and work in the school it will require a campaign driven by the Boards of Trustees and the Principals, and supported by the career advisors and other staff. Career advice is still seen by many classroom teachers as a venue for handing out information: this can change only if the culture of the school is seen to change, supported by the senior management team. The information is available, but is not always used in schools. From this perspective career advice is not working in secondary schools as well as could be expected.

The five career advisors I interviewed have developed systems for the provision of career information and guidance based on the changing needs of the students in each school rather than on planned policy and procedure. The Ministry of Education in October 2001 has called for proposal specifications for the revision of career information and guidance in New Zealand schools. The purpose of this revision is to provide teachers with an outcome-based document, which supports careers education in schools. It is hoped that this new document will clarify and ensure consistency across New Zealand in career education for the career advisors, students and school management. This will support career advisors in their quest to make career advice in New Zealand secondary schools work.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Is career advice in New Zealand Secondary Schools working? Five career advisors tell their stories.**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET**

**Student:** **Sally-Jane Smith**  
1 Wairere Road  
Bastia Hill  
Wanganui  
Phone 06 349 0891  
Email address: [sallysage@yahoo.com](mailto:sallysage@yahoo.com)

**Supervisors:** **Guyon Neutze**  
Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education  
Massey University, Wellington  
Phone: 04 801 2794 x 6309

**Alison Viskovic**  
Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education  
Massey University, Wellington  
Phone: 04 801 2794 x 6713

#### **Purpose of the Study.**

I am conducting this research as part of my Masters thesis at Massey University, in the Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education. The aim of the research is to describe the ways in which career advisors perceive and experience working in secondary schools in New Zealand in 2001.

Secondary schools are being increasingly seen as the initial stepping stone in which students develop the capacity to foster realistic and productive career pathways. Career development is perceived as a social and personal process, which ultimately should prepare the students to manage career transactions throughout their life.

My interest lies in the personal viewpoint of the career advisors. The focus of this research is in the unique way in which each career advisor perceives the world they work in. In telling their personal stories, the day to day lives of informing and guiding students will form a picture of what it is like to be responsible for preparing students for post secondary school destinations.

**Procedure.**

The identification and selection of participants will be drawn from secondary schools in (locality deleted for privacy). Interviews will be conducted at a venue chosen by the career advisor. It is planned for two interviews per person to take place, each of between thirty and forty-five minute's duration. At the completion of the first interview I will ask for each person to choose a pseudonym, for use in the research report or publication. I will also ask if they would take photographs, using a disposable camera I will supply. This I will collect after two weeks and have developed ready for the next interview.

**Confidentiality.**

Participation is voluntary and consent forms will be signed before the research commences. Participants also have the right to withdraw consent at any time. Research confidentiality is paramount and privacy will be respected. Any personal details gathered will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. The photographs will be returned with the negatives when the research is completed and the tapes will be erased. A copy of the transcribed notes and a draft of the research will be made available to the participants so that any necessary adjustments can be made. No participants or their school will be named.

**Method.**

An important part of the research will be your verbal interruption of your photos at the second interview, and my written interpretation of these. The different themes developed from the interviews and photographs will be compiled into a thesis, which will fully explore the findings and interruptions of the researcher. Participants will have the opportunity to read the final draft and make adjustments.

**Rights of the Participants.**

The rights of the participants will be respected, including the right to;

- decline to participate,
- refuse to answer any particular questions,
- withdraw from the study at any time,
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation,
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used,
- given access to the findings of the study when it is concluded.

Thank you,

Sally-Jane Smith

## Appendix B

### **Is career advice in New Zealand Secondary Schools working? Five career advisors tell their stories.**

#### **CONSENT FORM**

##### **Principal**

As the Principal of the Secondary School, I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand the school has the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree that the career advisor can provide information to the researcher on the understanding that their name and the name of the school will not be used. *(The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project).*

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audiotaped, on the consent of the careers advisor.

I agree for the career advisor to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signed:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Student:** **Sally-Jane Smith**  
1 Wairere Road  
Bastia Hill  
Wanganui  
Phone 06 349 0891  
Email address: [sallysage@yahoo.com](mailto:sallysage@yahoo.com)

## Appendix C

### **Is career advice in New Zealand Secondary Schools working? Five career advisors tell their stories.**

#### **CONSENT FORM Career Advisor**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name and the name of the school will not be used. *(The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project).*

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signed:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Student:** **Sally-Jane Smith**  
1 Wairere Road  
Bastia Hill  
Wanganui  
Phone 06 349 0891  
Email address: sallysage@yahoo.com

## Appendix D

Principal  
High School  
PO Box 0000  
New Zealand

Dear Principal,

I am writing to ask for your support in approaching the careers advisory staff at your High School, to conduct interviews on the ways in which career advisors perceive and experience working in secondary schools in New Zealand.

I am conducting this research as part of my Masters thesis at Massey University, in the Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education. I have enclosed an information sheet and a consent form to be given to the career advisor, which outline the purpose of my study, the procedure, confidentiality, method and the rights of the participants. I have also included a consent form for you to sign.

If you have any further queries I am happy to discuss this proposal in detail. I can be contacted at the following addresses or phone numbers:

Sally-Jane Smith  
1 Wairere Road  
Bastia Hill  
Wanganui  
Phone 06 349 0891 (work)  
06 343 1019 (home)  
Email address: [sallysage@yahoo.com](mailto:sallysage@yahoo.com)

My supervisor Alison Viskovic can also be contacted at Massey University – Wellington at the following Email address, [A.R.Viskovic@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.R.Viskovic@massey.ac.nz) She is happy to answer any further questions.

I thank you for your time and look forward to a positive response to my request. I will be in contact in the next few days to discuss the proposal further.

Yours sincerely,

Sally-Jane Smith

## Appendix E

High School  
PO Box 0000  
New Zealand

Dear Career advisor,

I am writing to ask for your support in participating in two interviews on the ways in which career advisors perceive and experience working in secondary schools in New Zealand.

I am conducting this research as part of my Masters thesis at Massey University, in the Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education. I have enclosed an information sheet and a consent form, which outline the purpose of my study, the procedure, confidentiality, method and the rights of the participants.

If you have any further queries I am happy to discuss this proposal in detail. I can be contacted at the following addresses or phone numbers:

Sally-Jane Smith  
1 Wairere Road  
Bastia Hill  
Wanganui  
Phone 06 349 0891 (work)  
06 343 1019 (home)  
Email address: [sallysage@yahoo.com](mailto:sallysage@yahoo.com)

My supervisor Alison Viskovic can also be contacted at Massey University – Wellington at the following Email address, [A.R.Viskovic@massey.ac.nz](mailto:A.R.Viskovic@massey.ac.nz) She is happy to answer any further questions.

I thank you for your time and look forward to a positive response to my request. I will be in contact in the next few days to discuss the proposal further.

Yours sincerely,

Sally-Jane Smith

## Appendix F

High School  
PO Box 0000  
New Zealand

0<sup>th</sup> July 01

Dear Career advisor,

Thank you for partaking in the interview. I hope the photographs are going well. I have included the transcript with this letter. I have used the name you chose and changed some names/initials, so they cannot be recognised.

I will only be using aspects of the transcript in the final write up. Please feel free to change any mistakes I have made or anything you don't wish to be used. I look forward to meeting up again in two weeks time to talk over the photographs.

Best wishes for a great holiday break.

Kind regards

Sally-Jane Smith



## Appendix G

High School  
PO Box 0000  
New Zealand

0<sup>th</sup> August 01

Dear Career advisor,

Thank you for participating in the second interview on Friday. It was interesting discussing the photographs. I have included the re typed first transcript and the second transcript with this letter.

As I said in the first letter, I will only be using aspects of the transcript in the final write up. Please feel free to change any mistakes I have made or anything you don't wish to be used.

When I have finished with the photographs I will send them back to you as promised. The transcripts will be destroyed once the thesis is completed. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Sally-Jane Smith