An Evaluation of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick: Implications for policy and practice in initial education for Guidance Counsellors

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ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick: Implications for policy and practice in initial education for Guidance Counsellors

The focus of the study is on a guidance counsellor education programme offered by the University of Limerick (UL). The programme is a two-year part-time course, which is delivered over four semesters and two summer schools. It is listed as one of the six recognised guidance counsellor education programmes by the national professional body for guidance counsellors in Ireland, The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the extent to which the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at UL is in keeping with both national and international policy requirements in relation to the initial education of guidance counsellors. In addition, good practice in guidance counsellor education is identified, acknowledged and affirmed.

The study begins by introducing the key terminology associated with the research. This is followed by an examination of the need for research on a guidance counsellor education programme by outlining gaps in the existing body of research. A contextual chapter outlines the development of guidance counselling, the location of the research study and my own position as a researcher within the context of the study. Establishing the context in this way highlights areas that merit further consideration with reference to current and future policy.

A mixed methodology approach was taken to the evaluation of the UL programme, using an adapted model of evaluation informed by the ‘3Ps’ Model of Teaching and Learning (Biggs, 2001) and a framework developed by The Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (Borgen, Hiebert and Michaud, 2009). The model explored the input, process and output factors of the programme. More specifically, this research investigated areas outlined in the central research questions with graduates of the programme. The findings are discussed in light of the aim, objectives and central research questions. Themes such as the complexity of the implementation of the guidance counsellor education course content and of the challenges of the three-dimensional role (educational, vocational/career, personal/social) of the guidance counsellor in Irish secondary education are discussed.

Feedback from the evaluation is of interest to a variety of stakeholders including the initial course design team of the UL programme. This team consisted of, representatives from the IGC, the Acting Dean for the College of Education (as it was known at the time) in UL, the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs in UL, a lecturer and the Head of the Education and Professional Studies Department in UL, a lecturer from the Personnel and Employment Relations Department in UL, an educational psychologist representing the DES and the Head of the counselling unit in UL. Concluding remarks inform the work of course leaders and lecturers in guidance counsellor education, the IGC, the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), the Department of Education and Skills (DES), in particular the Guidance Inspectorate, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), and practicing guidance counsellors.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project is entirely my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award, or part thereof, at this or any other educational establishment.

Signature  ____________________________________________

Date  ____________________________________________
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<tr>
<td>CEDEFOP</td>
<td>European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuous Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRWG</td>
<td>Canadian Research Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAT</td>
<td>Differential Aptitude Tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEIS</td>
<td>Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools</td>
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<td>ESRI</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Institute</td>
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<td>GEI</td>
<td>Guidance Enhancement Initiative</td>
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<td>GDGC</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>IAEVG</td>
<td>International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance</td>
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<td>NGF</td>
<td>National Guidance Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td>Psychological Society of Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>REBT</td>
<td>Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
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<td>TC</td>
<td>Teaching Council of Ireland</td>
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<td>UL</td>
<td>University of Limerick</td>
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<td>VEC</td>
<td>Vocational Education Committee</td>
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<td>3P’s</td>
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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

1.0 Introduction
In Ireland, guidance counsellors provide a guidance and counselling service within the whole school guidance service and adult guidance sectors. The guidance counsellor has a significant function within the Irish education system as they provide for the personal, social, educational and vocational development of both young and adult learners. Over the last number of years there has been a vast growth of interest in the field of guidance and counselling (Bor et al., 2002), (Kidd, 2006) (Hughes and Gratian, 2009). Today, guidance counsellors manage a number of different roles while under an increasing spotlight. This research focuses on an initial education programme for guidance counsellors, the University of Limerick Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling (GDGC), in order to establish how competent graduates from the programme are for the role of the guidance counsellor and to identify good practice in guidance counsellor education.

The study is presented in seven chapters. In this chapter an introduction to the topic of the study and the contents of the thesis is provided. The research topic is introduced by defining the relevant key terminology, followed by an outline of the aim, objectives and rationale of this research. The central research questions are described and the main theoretical model from which these questions developed is illustrated. In conclusion to this chapter the overall plan of the thesis is presented with a chapter-by-chapter content breakdown.

1.1 Key Terminology
The title of this research is ‘An evaluation of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick: Implications for policy and practice in initial education for Guidance Counsellors.’

Key terms included in the research title and essential to this study can be listed as ‘guidance counselling’, ‘evaluation’, and ‘the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick’. In addition, the research is discussed with
reference to other European programmes. In order to illuminate the focus of the research study it is necessary to outline and clarify the meaning of each of the key terms in relation to the context of this study.

1.1.1 Guidance Counselling

Establishing a commonly shared understanding of ‘guidance counselling’ is a highly contested area. Having considered a variety of perspectives from sources such as Sultana (2004), National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE 2004), McCoy (2006), Wannan and McCarthy (2005) and Kidd (2006), the definition of ‘guidance’ offered by the National Guidance Forum (NGF) is adopted for this thesis:

Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society (NGF, 2007: 6).

The variety of perspectives on guidance and the rationale for employing the NGF perspective throughout this study are explored in greater detail in section 3.1. It is important at this stage to state that while guidance counsellors provide a guidance and counselling service within a wide variety of settings across the life span, the weight of focus in this thesis is more strongly orientated towards second-level (students aged 12-18) guidance counsellors as the majority of graduates from the University of Limerick (UL) programme are employed in this sector, as illustrated in Chapter 5 of the thesis.

1.1.2 Evaluation

The term ‘evaluation’ is included in the research title as essentially the research seeks to evaluate an existing educational programme through the central research questions and to identify models of good and interesting practice in guidance counsellor education. This term has been selected having problematised the nature of this thesis, explored the variety of approaches to evaluation and determined the epistemological and the ontological approaches underpinning the research (see Chapter 4). Underlying the term ‘evaluation’ is the motivation for this study to seek knowledge, and to explore and illuminate new learning in the area of guidance counsellor education. Illuminative evaluation is described as focusing upon the holistic study of educational programmes.
in order to throw light on what was happening, as it happened, from the perspective of all those involved (Burden, 2008: 222).

This study is therefore principally an evaluation with illuminative and exploratory characteristics. The nature of the study is explored in greater depth in section 4.2.

1.1.3 The Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick

The Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling (GDGC) at UL is a two-year part-time programme, which is delivered over four semesters and two summer schools. The programme also includes an induction week, two residential weekends, a school placement and an industrial placement. The programme’s participants are required to attend ten sessions of personal counselling for each year of the course. Participants can take part in the programme on campus at UL or they may choose from three other outreach locations: Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre, Dublin West Education Centre or Kerry Education Service Centre in Killarney. On one occasion in 2008 the programme was offered in Galway to accommodate teachers from the Aran Islands. The programme has been in operation at the University of Limerick for twelve years and more than 300 guidance counsellors have graduated during that time. Graduates of a Guidance Counselling Graduate Diploma in Ireland are expected to undertake roles that are outlined by the NCGE (National Centre for Guidance in Education) (2004: 20). These roles are listed as providing counselling, support, assessment, information, and classroom guidance activities, as well as planning and organising workshop learning, referrals, and professional development. A more recent and specific competency framework is outlined by the National Guidance Forum (2007) report. This framework consists of five main areas and is illustrated in Figure 1.1.
Figure 1.1: An organisational chart of the National Guidance Forum competency framework (2007: 7)
The Forum report indicates that the implementation of this framework is supported by quality standards for service delivery and appropriately qualified practitioners. The framework is said to play a significant role in influencing the future professional education and training of practitioners who will provide guidance across the life cycle and in a range of different contexts (NFG, 2007). In this research study the framework is used when collecting data on the roles that graduates of the UL programme adhere to. Furthermore, the framework is used to ascertain whether guidance counselling education graduates are over- or under-prepared to provide a guidance service that is in line with quality standards for service delivery.

1.2 Reference to Other European Union Guidance Counsellor Education Programmes

This study is discussed with reference to two other European guidance counsellor education programmes. Insights into and comparisons with the two programmes are drawn upon in order to add further depth to interesting themes and to provide some comparative analysis by adopting a European dimension to the research. Undertaking this additional exploratory element to the research provides the opportunity to consider the research questions from both national and European perspectives. A final outcome of this aspect of the research is to identify good practice in European settings for the course directors and team members involved with the UL programme to consider. Neither University is referred to directly in order to ensure anonymity of the guidance counselling education programme course directors who are research participants to this study.

The first programme focuses on a Masters in Guidance Counselling offered at a University in Finland. This programme was chosen due to established links between the UL course director and the guidance counselling research co-ordinator at the University in Finland. The Institute for Educational Research established at the University lists guidance as one of its focus areas. The OECD review of career guidance policies in Finland states that,

The University (full name extracted) has made a follow-up study of counsellors’ work in different settings. Additionally, individual postgraduate students focus on guidance issues in the field of education or psychology.
Individual studies have been carried out with a focus on policy issues (Kasurinen and Vuorinen, 2002: 80).

Ireland and Finland have seen similar legislative developments in relation to the place of guidance and counselling in schools. In Finland, educational legislation introduced in 1998 strengthened the position of educational guidance by including “the right to pupil/student guidance and counselling” in the regulations of all school types. In Ireland, The Education Act 1998, section 9(c), states that a school shall use its available resources “to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.” The University in Finland’s programme is of an exemplary nature, as it has been reviewed and revised in accordance with the European two-cycle Higher Education (HE) programme structure and the International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) competence standards adopted at the organisation’s annual conference in Bern in 2003.

The second programme of reference is a Masters programme in Guidance Studies offered at a University based in the East Midlands of the United Kingdom. An established link between the UL Department of Education and Professional Studies’ professor and the UK University was initially utilised to develop contacts for this second programme of reference. The guidance counselling education programme offered by the UK University is an online programme offered by a centre for excellence in research and professional development within the career guidance sector. The course is divided into key stages, so that students can achieve related qualifications and proceed, where appropriate, through a progression framework which includes: Postgraduate Certificate in Education; Postgraduate Diploma in Education: Guidance Studies; and MA in Education: Guidance Studies. McCarthy (2001) notes the significance of such a course:

There appears to be little attempt nationally, UK excepted, to develop a training and qualifications structure that enables guidance workers to progress from non-expert to expert status (2001: 7).

It is envisaged by the National Guidance Forum (2007) that in the future the initial education and training of guidance practitioners in Ireland will be modular, allowing practitioners to become qualified to work in a range of roles across the entire spectrum of lifelong guidance services. It is further envisaged that practitioners will be enabled to
return to education if they so wish, to study and qualify in additional modules, so that practitioners can take on new guidance roles within the national guidance service.

1.3 Aim, Objectives and Rationale for this Research
The underlying aim as stated at the outset is to explore the extent to which the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick is in keeping with both international and national policy requirements in relation to the initial education of guidance counsellors.

The objectives of the study are to:

- Conduct an evaluation of the UL programme using an input-process-output model, which has been informed by Biggs’ ‘3P’ model of Teaching and Learning (1999) and a framework developed by The Canadian Research Working Group (Borgen, Hiebert and Michaud, 2009) on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development.
- Explore the complexities of an initial education programme for guidance counsellors.
- Reveal the key narratives of practising guidance counsellors.
- Identify good practice that will enhance the provision of guidance counsellor initial education.

In the context of policy implications for the provision of guidance counselling education programmes at higher education level, parties who may consider recommendations include a variety of stakeholders such as course directors of guidance counsellor education programmes, The Institute of Guidance Counsellors, The National Centre for Guidance Education, The Department of Education and Skills, and The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

This research study is designed to inform current and future programme reviews in order to:

- Enhance the programme where appropriate.
- Add an international dimension to the programme where suitable.
- Celebrate the programme’s achievements by acknowledging and affirming good practice.
Past literature (OECD, 2002; Sultana, 2004; Bimrose et al, 2006; Hughes & Gration, 2009; Hearne, 2010; and Hughes, 2011) has emphasised the importance of quality assurance and evaluation studies in the area of guidance and counselling. It has been recognised nationally that changes are occurring to both the practice of guidance counselling and the profile of the guidance counsellor. The Department of Education and Science (now the Department of Education and Skills (DES)) inspectorate review of guidance counselling in Ireland (2006) stated that,

The training of future guidance counsellors needs to be considered at policy level in the context of the increasing age profile of the current cohort and the recent improvements in the schedule of hours allocated to schools for guidance. It is likely that there will be an increased demand for places on the initial training courses over the coming years and this will require forward planning (2006: 129).

More specifically, it has been recommended that research into guidance counsellor education programmes should be carried out in order to observe the roles guidance counsellors are undertaking. The most significant existing research that relates to this study is the ‘Guidance for Life’ report by the NGF (2007). This report suggests ensuring that people working in guidance are well trained and supported, with proper quality assurance procedures in place NGF (2007). Furthermore, the report describes the contribution that research such as this study will offer, by ensuring the UL programme provides high quality education so that its graduates are prepared to contribute successfully to both Irish and European guidance services. The European Union Resolution on ‘Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the Field of Guidance Throughout Life in Europe’, adopted in May 2004, is cited in the NGF’s ‘Guidance for Life’ report. It states that,

High quality guidance provision throughout life is a key component of education, training and employability strategies to attain the strategic goal of Europe becoming the world’s most dynamic knowledge-based society by 2010 (2007: 34).

The NGF report indicates that ‘quality graduates’ will play a part in the provision of an effective guidance service. It also suggests that,

Effective guidance provision is also considered to play a key role in promoting social inclusion, equality, and active citizenship by encouraging and supporting
individuals’ participation in education and training and in assisting them to attain self-fulfilment (2007: 35).

In order to achieve an effective guidance provision, the NGF report suggests that the nature and extent of current guidance services must be reviewed and such a review must include an evaluation of the training and qualification requirements for all guidance workers (2007: 35). While reports such as ‘Guidance for All’ (ESRI, 2006) and ‘Guidance for Life’ (NGF, 2007) do contain informative studies into the whole guidance service in Ireland, both recognise the need for exploration and evaluation of guidance counsellor education programmes. This research is both original and relevant to the guidance counselling community as it addresses an identified gap in research. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) has published a report on professionalising career guidance and guidance counsellor competencies, which states that,

Appropriate initial and further training of guidance counsellors is crucial as they have a central position in guidance service delivery and development (Cedefop, 2009: 1).

The report also describes the need for research studies that provide findings in relation to guidance counsellor education programmes:

There is a need to seek evidence on what levels and forms of training are effective in developing career guidance practice which is able to deliver the client outcomes needed to achieve desired policy outcomes in each country and to meet EU goals (Cedefop, 2009: 93).

This statement will be explored further in Chapter 6 in relation to the findings from this study, which can contribute to the discourse on effective forms of guidance counsellor education. McKenna et al. (1997) reinforce the importance of studies like this:

In the Irish context it might be argued that existing research gives us a good deal of information regarding the historical development of the guidance service, the role of the guidance counsellor in schools in terms of the types of work undertaken, the division of time, and to an extent the type of student problems encountered. What is by and large missing from the research to date is rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of the guidance service, in terms of achievement of goals; the nature and extent of training of counsellors and adequacy of support services. (McKenna et al., 1997: 12)
The above rationale for the study facilitates the formulation of the research questions that are outlined in the next section.

1.4 Central Research Questions

The central research questions have been developed using the input-process-output model, which is presented later in this chapter. The central research questions were devised in light of both the aim and objectives of the research and the rationale for undertaking the study. These questions not only provide a framework in which to evaluate the UL programme but also the opportunity for knowledge creation and understanding.

1.4.1 Input

Firstly, input factors are considered. Biggs (2001: 139) describes student factors and teaching context as essential presage factors to consider when evaluating an education programme.

1. The Programme: The evolution of the UL programme is tracked in order to establish the context from which the current input factors have emerged. Specific input factors and the relationship they have with the current course content and methodology are explored. These factors include the course director’s personal narrative, the formally documented aims of the programme and the national professional body policy provision.

2. The Participant: This research segment explores student input factors such as student background characteristics and reasons why participants chose to undertake a guidance counsellor education programme.

1.4.2 Process

Process factors as outlined by Biggs (2001: 139) are the focus for the following research question. However, when answering this research question the relationship between process and outcomes as described by Borgen et al. (2009: 15) will be considered.

3. This section of the study explores the learning-focused activities and ongoing approaches to learning that take place as part of the programme such as the focus
on personal development, the experiential learning approach and the emphasis on reflective practice.

1.4.3 Output

Borgen et al. (2009: 15) highlight learning outcomes, personal outcomes and impact outcomes as indicators of ‘client’, or in this case ‘graduate’, change.

4. The output section of this evaluation determines the career paths of the programme graduates. Both personal learning outcomes and competency-based learning outcomes are ascertained, along with the continuing professional development needs of graduates.

5. The final section of this study involves referring to input, process and output factors of other European programmes in order to critically analyse the UL programme from a European viewpoint.

1.5 A Model to Evaluate the UL GDGC

![Diagram: Model to Evaluate the UL GDGC]

Figure 1.2: Adapted model informed by Biggs (The ‘3P’ Model of Teaching and Learning) and a framework developed by The Canadian Research Working Group (Borgen, Hiebert and Michaud, 2009) on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development
1.6 Plan of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the research study by identifying the perspective on guidance counselling that underlies this research project. The need for evidence surrounding guidance counsellor education programmes is highlighted and the aim and objectives of the research study are outlined.

Chapter 2 provides a contextual overview of the study in terms of the development of guidance counselling, the location of the research study and my own position as a researcher within the context of the research.

Chapter 3 reviews recent national and international literature, previous research, and theory in the guidance counselling area.

Chapter 4 gives an account of the methodological framework underpinning the research design. It also outlines the methods of data collection and analysis that were applied in the research design.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of this study.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings with reference to the central research questions and emerging themes within the context of previous research.

Chapter 7 presents concluding points within the context of the aim and objectives of the study. This chapter also provides a reflection on my own position as a researcher in the context of the study.

1.7 Conclusion

The University of Limerick GDGC has a significant role to play in the education of guidance counsellors in Ireland. It is currently the only programme to offer education to prospective guidance counsellors in an outreach capacity. With the current economic climate in Ireland adding further to the personal, social, educational and career guidance needs of young people and adults, a continued response to these needs must ensue. These needs are being recognised by educators and members of the wider community, and programmes such as the University of Limerick GDGC are the educational pathway towards gaining the knowledge and skills required to provide a guidance counselling
service to young people and adults. Celebrating good practice and recognising areas for improvement in the educational process of becoming a guidance counsellor are as important as the outcome. This chapter has rationalised the significance of the study. By identifying areas of good and interesting practice a significant contribution to the body of knowledge surrounding guidance counsellor education will be made. The aim and objectives for the study have been described. The central research questions have been presented alongside the model used to explore these questions. Finally the plan for the overall document has been outlined to show the main topics covered in each chapter. Following on from this introductory chapter is the context chapter.
CHAPTER TWO – CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

2.0 Introduction
Documenting an understanding of the wider context of guidance counselling is an important process to engage with in order to work towards an in-depth understanding of guidance counselling education. A contextual overview is provided in terms of three dimensions:

1. The development of guidance counselling.
2. The location of the research study.
3. My own position as a researcher within the context of the study.

The idea of framing the chapter using these three contextual aspects was initially sourced from a study by Hearne (2010), which worked towards an understanding of the measurement of individual progression in adult guidance. At the outset of this chapter is a rationale for the importance of setting the broader context by exploring the growth and development of guidance counselling at national and international level.

2.1 A Rationale for Setting the Broader Context
The previous chapter provided a general introduction to the research topic and outlined the central research questions. One research question (section 1.4.1) highlights the importance of tracking the evolution of the UL programme to establish the context from which the current input factors (for example, entry requirements) have emerged.

In order to carry out an evaluation of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at UL it is a valuable and rigorous task for the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the development of guidance counselling nationally and internationally. Creemers and Scheerens (1994) describe the importance of establishing the context as the first level for research using the input-process-output approach, and how such a multi-level approach adds robustness to the research:

Educational effectiveness as a research programme moved from an input-output paradigm to an input-process-output paradigm and, in view of the fact that so-
called contextual school effectiveness is gaining importance, this might be more properly termed a context-input-process-output-based approach (1994: 125).

The benefit of having a contextual dimension is recognised by literature in research methodology, but also in specific guidance counselling literature. McLeod describes how,

> To understand what counselling is, and what counsellors do, it is necessary to have an appreciation of the historical origins and development of this form of helping (1998: 29).

Lambie and Williamson (2004) explain how countries, events and people are often defined by their histories, and the same can be said for school guidance counselling:

> The school guidance counselling historical narrative constructs the lens through which individuals interpret the profession. To understand and possibly alleviate the current incongruence between the actual and the ideal professional identity of PSC’s ‘school guidance counsellors’, the historical narrative configuring the profession needs to be understood, appreciated, and then possibly reconstructed (2004: 124).

The historical narrative with which to understand the Irish guidance counsellor is well developed in literature (McCoy, 2006: NGF, 2007 and Sheil and Lewis, 1993). Furthermore, discourse surrounding the professional identity of guidance counsellors is currently well established in the guidance counselling community (Sultana, 2004; Cedefop, 2009 and Bimrose, 2006). Lambie and Williamson (2004) describe how understanding the historical narrative is important when entering the discourse surrounding the professional identity of guidance counsellors. As I intend to explore the professional identity of guidance counsellors at various stages throughout this study, it is important to understand the connection between historical narrative and professional identity from the outset.

This context chapter can be described as having two underlying purposes. The first is to allow the researcher to gain an understanding of the narrative, complexity and discourse surrounding the development of guidance and counselling and the guidance counselling profession; the second is to set the foundation (context level) for the research model (input, process, output levels) in order to achieve a robust research study.
2.2 **An Historical Overview of the Development of Guidance Counselling**

Before delving into the context of guidance counselling, this section briefly outlines the historical values held by the Irish education system and Irish society. McCormack (2010: 30) describes the historical values apparent within Irish society as reflecting those of Consensualism. This concept is the perception that all members of society have the same needs and desires for their educational experiences and ignores variations in viewpoints. In Irish post-primary education the apparent historical values are Classical Humanism and Human Capital Theory (McCormack, 2010). The Classical Humanism model of education centres on the perception that the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge and cognitive ability are paramount, rather than affective education. Human Capital Theory is the concept of investing in education in order to gain an economic return. These three theoretical concepts identified by McCormack (2010) as apparent within Irish society and education emphasise the broader context within which guidance counselling is placed, but do not align with the values underlying the concept of guidance counselling and reflected in the current guidance counselling community.

While some perspectives on career guidance or career coaching reflect aspects of Human Capital Theory, overall the values of Consensualism, Classical Humanism and Human Capital Theory are incongruently positioned in comparison with the theoretical concepts leading to the evolution of pastoral care and affective education. The implications of this are explored in the literature review.

The following section includes an overview of significant historical developments within the broader context of guidance counselling, namely pastoral care and affective education. It describes how pastoral care and affective education developed despite the wider contrasting theoretical values of Irish society and the Irish post-primary education system at the time. Social Capital Theory is introduced, as its place in Irish society and the Irish education system begins to emerge, influencing the place of affective education. The section begins by positioning the role of affective education and pastoral care in the guidance counselling context.
2.2.1 The Role of Affective Education and Pastoral Care in the Evolution of Guidance Counselling

Affective education can be defined as the component of the educational process that concerns itself with students’ attitudes, feelings, beliefs and emotions (Best, 1995: 5). Marland (1980) argued that the education of a child requires the mastery of much more than an academic curriculum. It requires the personal and social development of the child and it ought to be planned for and provided by schools. Catering for affective education is now a whole school activity, in which guidance counselling, pastoral care and social, personal and health education have central roles. These roles have come about in different ways but they have all added to the increased awareness of the affective domain in education.

Best (1995) describes how the role of the teacher has changed considerably due to changes in wider political perspectives that have come to dictate social thought at different times since 1900. He also describes how education must include the affective domain in order to address pupils’ needs. This concept is also evident in more recent literature; for example, ‘The School Matters Report’ (DES, 2006: 3) refers to the school as a “social laboratory”. The concept of affective education is humanistic in nature and it recognises the need to address pupils’ emotional well-being in order for significant learning to occur. In discussing the need for pastoral care Marland states, “I see the concern for knowledge as only part of the greater need” (1974: 10).

Best (1995) describes three traditional areas that influence the affective education domain. These are counselling, curriculum innovation such as social, personal and health education, and pastoral care. Marland (1974) describes pastoral care as the broad area within which guidance falls.

The broad area of ‘pastoral care’ can be broken down into complementary separate aims:

(i) to assist the individual to enrich his life;
(ii) to help prepare the young person for educational choice;
(iii) to offer guidance or counselling, helping young people to make their own decisions – by question and focus, and by information where appropriate;
(iv) to support the ‘subject’ teaching;
(v) to assist the individual to develop his or her own life-style and to respect that of others;
(vi) to maintain an orderly atmosphere in which all this is possible

(Marland, 1974: 10).
Marland’s explanation shows that guidance and counselling is a separate aim under the broad heading of pastoral care. Pastoral care is said to originate from the influence of religious orders. O’Loughlin’s (2000) thesis describes the work of Thomas Arnold, a headmaster in the late eighteenth century, who illustrated the emphasis placed on religion within education at the time. “Arnold emphasized religious and moral principles first, gentlemanly conduct second, and intellectual ability third” (2000: 7). The reliance on religion for pastoral care carried right through the community in some cases. McLeod describes how “emotional or inter-personal problems were dealt with by the local priest; for example, through Catholic confessional” (1998: 14). The religious influence is also related directly to guidance and counselling. McLeod (1998) suggests that religion is a field of study which has a strong influence on counselling theory and practice.

Several counselling agencies have begun their life as branches of the Church, or have been helped into existence by founders with a religious calling. Many key figures in the history of counselling and psychotherapy have had strong religious backgrounds, and have attempted to integrate the work of the counsellor with the search for spiritual meaning (McLeod, 1998: 9).

Halmos (1965), cited in McLeod (1998), argued that religious faith is being replaced by a set of beliefs and values known as “faith of the counsellors” (1998: 20). An article by Hooper (1998) describes how, until the second or third decade of the last century, psycho-social problems were dealt with by family members, by priests and by enlightened doctors. Hooper identifies four concepts that changed this situation:

First, the discovery by Freud and his followers in Europe that specifically designed therapeutic human relationships could be healing; second, the increasing application of scientific methods of data analysis to the psycho-social world; third, the rapid demographic and economic changes resting on technology; and fourth, the demise of a fatalistic religious view of our life on earth (1998: 120).

Pupils in schools now look towards parents, teachers and significant others for moral influence and not so much to priests as was previously the case. Article 42(4) of the Irish Constitution articulates that the State,

…..shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other educational facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation (Government of Ireland, 2002).
The Irish Constitution, which dates back to 1937, indicates the long tradition of pastoral care and the dominant place of religion in moral education. This tradition of pastoral care in schools has been transmitted into the teaching role. Bor et al. (2002) provide an explanation for the recent pastoral care role change:

The development of a separate speciality of counselling in schools has in part resulted from the decline of the traditional pastoral roles that teachers used to take on (Bor et al., 2002: 1).

Best (1995) suggests that teachers accept the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in “the notion of the teacher in loco parentis”, i.e., in place of the parents, but he recognises past variations in the emphasis placed on the caring and instructional role of the teacher. He describes different attempts to map the historical development of the concept and practice of pastoral care in education, including that provided by Blackburn (1983a; 1983b):

...where pastoral care is represented as evolving through phases in which a general concern for ‘knowing’ and ‘tracking’ children in new and large comprehensive schools gave way to the development of more focused forms of guidance and counselling of an academic, personal, social, and vocational nature, culminating in the 1970s in more fully developed programmes of personal, social and vocational education (1995: 17).

Collins (1998) describes how pastoral care in Britain dates back to the 1950s and the development of comprehensive and community schools. She examines how pastoral care in Ireland developed similarly but slightly later in the 1960s and 1970s. She explains how the caring/affective form of education has become more formally recognised since the 1970s.

The basic agreement is that a formal recognition of affective education has been growing in the Irish educational system, specifically since the early 1970s (Collins, 1998: 36).

Collins highlights a significant contrast between British and Irish pastoral care development in that, “The term entered British official literature in 1974, and comes into Irish official statements in 1994” (1998: 31). Collins describes the 1994 National Education Convention as,

...a milestone in public awareness of and (for the first time) clear articulation in national policy of the term ‘pastoral care’ within the ‘central institution’ system. (Collins, 1998: 31)
The Minister for Education at the time, Ms. Bhreathnach, supported the motion to develop a report that formed the basis of the government’s White Paper, *Charting Our Educational Future*, in which it is recognised that “schools actively influence all aspects of the growth and development of their students” (1995: 161). The White Paper was a significant development in the affective domain of Irish education in that it recognised and supported pastoral care in schools.

Recognition was the first stepping stone, but Marland (1974) maintains that while the importance of pastoral care was recognised, it was unknown how exactly to engage in such a caring activity.

The paradox of the school is that never before has close pastoral care been so important for the total well-being of pupils and society, and yet never before has it been so difficult to establish the best pattern of care. To do so though is the central challenge to the school today and in the foreseeable future (Marland, 1974: 17).

In the UK, Jones (1977) describes the situation where no official guidance counsellor was employed in a school but a strong pastoral care system existed, which was just as effective in the provision of guidance.

There is in the vast majority of secondary schools a pastoral care system, which is indeed systematic, structured and organized; with points and posts of responsibility allocated to it; with specific tasks to do apart from the day-to-day care and discipline, such as smoothing the transition from primary to secondary school, providing guidance for subject choices, offering careers advice and preparing for the transition from school to work (Jones, 1977: 13).

Up to the 1970s such a system was effective; however, due to the greater scale of and diversity within schools more distinct roles in pastoral care became necessary. Similarly, the pattern of care for pupils that developed in Ireland took place in a number of ways. Firstly, through focused forms of pastoral care such as social, personal and health education and guidance counselling, the term is more formally established and recognised in Ireland. Secondly, Collins describes how the 1980s witnessed,

......an ongoing awareness that care provided by the ‘good teacher’ and ‘good school’ was still central, but that society and family change, and the development of larger comprehensive and co-educational schools necessitated clearer structures, definite programmes, and suitable teacher in-service training (Collins, 1998: 41).
Collins also notes that this decade saw the development of significant work with post-primary schools by the Psychological Service of the DES. In later years this service became known as NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) and is described by the DES as supporting the personal, social, and educational development of all children through the “application of psychological theory and practice in education having particular regard for children with special educational needs” (DES, 2007). The ‘Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools’ by the DES (2006) indicates that between September 2001 and June 2005, 131 guidance inspections were carried out (2006: 8). Further on in the review it is suggested that the NEPS service needed to be expanded in order to provide support for the guidance service within the school. The review describes how one principal stated that “the NEPS service needs to be increased to a workable level. The present service is totally inadequate” (2006: 42). Five years on the challenge for NEPS, as with many services at this time, surrounds the lack of resources and finance in light of an increasing need for the service.

Examples of the relationship between the evolution of pastoral care and guidance counselling are evident as both are concerned with the affective domain of education. Collins explains that the first postgraduate course in pastoral care was provided by the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and Marino Institute of Education, Dublin in 1992-1995, and Collins describes how this course was subsequently developed into School Guidance Counselling courses in the pastoral care context” (1999: 32). The NCCA ‘Post-primary Curriculum Framework for Guidance Consultation Report’ states that “guidance is seen to have a strongly pastoral orientation” (2007: 20). These statements reinforce the central role of counselling in pastoral care and suggest a link between the recognition of the pastoral need in education and guidance counselling. As Collins and McNiff argue,

\[ \text{Pastoral care is a commitment to be aware of the needs of others, a commitment to respond to those needs in a way that will be life-enhancing for all (1999: 13).} \]

The emergence and recognition of the affective domain of education is now becoming more clearly affirmed within the wider educational community. Documents from the DES (2006) and the Teaching Council (2007) clearly show how educational values have shifted. Movement has progressed from centrally focusing on the values of Classical Humanism, where the achievement of high Leaving Certificate points sits comfortably,
to recognising the importance of students societal role. The core values of the teaching profession are listed by the Teaching Council (2007: 10) as:

- **Quality of Education**
  Teachers promote and maintain the highest quality of educational experiences for their students. Teachers facilitate student progression in their learning and development and their effective engagement with the curriculum.

- **Student-Centred Learning**
  Teachers seek to create an environment where students are active agents in the learning process.

- **Responding to Change**
  Teachers acknowledge the changing nature of society and recognise their role in providing appropriate educational responses to cater for the identified needs of students. It is recognised that this is enhanced through mutual support from all partners in education.

- **Professional Development**
  Teachers reflect on and continue to improve their own professional practice and are provided with opportunities to engage in professional development and the process of curriculum development.

- **Holistic Development**
  Teachers are committed to a holistic vision of education which includes the aesthetic, cognitive, intellectual, critical, cultural, emotional, imaginative, creative, moral, social, political, spiritual, physical and healthy development of their students.

- **Cultural Values**
  Teachers see themselves as providing opportunities for the development of awareness and appreciation of cultural values being mindful of Irish, European and more global contexts.

- **Social Justice, Equality and Inclusion**
  Teachers in their professional role show commitment to democracy, social justice, equality and inclusion. They encourage active citizenship and support students in thinking critically about significant social issues, in valuing and accommodating diversity and in responding appropriately.

These core values clearly reflect a move from Classical Humanism and Human Capital Theory to Social Capital Theory. McCormack (2010) describes how economic thinking and Human Capital Theory have dominated education for the past 50 years, with the concept of Social Capital Theory having gained ground in more recent years. The Teaching Council (2007) document is amongst a number of documents, which provides evidence of the emergence of a social capital value system within the Irish education profession, which supports inclusivity and is culturally aware.
2.3 The Establishment of Guidance Counselling Internationally

The emerging social capital theoretical values of Irish society and the education system, and the historical links between education and religious orders, are both recognised as influencing the affective and pastoral care domains of education in Ireland. Internationally, guidance counselling emerged as a result of individual responses (Baker and Gerlers, 2004) before wider societal values shifted from Human Capital Theory. A response to people’s needs can be viewed as the main influence in the establishment of guidance counselling across the globe. Baker and Gerlers describe how “guidance and counselling developed in America due to the recognition of people’s needs by significant individuals such as Rogers” (2004: 10). The following section specifically looks at the growth of guidance counselling internationally.

2.3.1 The Response to Students’ Guidance Needs in the United States

As Baker and Gerlers explain,

What we think of currently as school counselling did not begin with a formal design consisting of established goals, assumptions, and functions. It evolved to what it is today (2004: 10).

For the most part the evolution of the service is due to a series of responses made to meet the needs of students. Baker and Gerler describe how responding to local needs was the main influence when initiating guidance-type services in the USA. Parsons, Beers and Freud influenced the development of school counselling in the early years of the twentieth century in the United States by responding to the needs of the students they taught. This led to a growth in the 1920s and 1930s of the number of guidance teachers in schools; however, as Baker and Gerler note, “no widely accepted standards for training or practice existed” (2004: 12). As a result, the dominant school guidance model that emerged was ‘trait and factor’ or ‘directive guidance’, which promoted enhancing normal adjustment, goal setting and assisting individuals to achieve satisfying lifestyles. Counselling included analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, counselling, and follow-up, and techniques for forcing conformity and changing attitudes were recommended. The directive approach to guidance ultimately proved to be too constricted. This was not the ideal situation, as the need for personal counselling during war time was at a high point in the United States. It was, however, the beginning,
and it led to improvements throughout the guidance and counselling service in the United States.

Most significantly, post-World War II the work of Carl Rogers, which emphasised the counselling relationship and climate, gradually emerged as the dominant form of guidance. Baker and Gerler describe how “Rogers’ influence had moved school counsellors away from being highly directive towards being eclectic” (2004: 13). Nelson-Jones (1995) describes how Carl Rogers was brought up in an environment where parents tended to dominate their families. Rogers’ work reflects his upbringing.

His person-centred counselling reflects the need for individuals to have nurturing and accepting relationships within which to work through the effects of judgemental family upbringings so that they can become persons (Nelson-Jones, 1995: 8).

Rogers introduced the personal domain to counselling and it is now recognised nationally and internationally. The NGF report (2007) highlights the person-centred approach when it states that “the lifelong guidance framework is designed to reflect person-centred values and to promote personal, social and economic development” (2007: 14). The UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling includes Rogers’ theory and literature on personal counselling. This influence is also evident in the Irish guidance service as suggested by Ryan in his 1993 report:

The Irish guidance counselling service tends to be a compromise between the American model, which emphasises personal counselling, and the European model, which almost exclusively focuses on the narrower concept of career guidance (Ryan, 1993: 63).

The influence of the early evolution of the United States’ guidance service and the work of Carl Rogers is evident in the Irish context. In particular, it may be suggested that this influence has led to the strength of the personal dimension in guidance counselling in Ireland. Savickas (2008: 97) considers the history of the American guidance counselling profession, especially the origins and development of its four main methods for helping people choose jobs. During four economic eras, the four distinct helping methods evolved in the following sequence: mentoring, guiding, counselling, and constructing. Savickas highlights that each time the social organisation of work changes, so does society’s methods for helping individuals make vocational choices. Other relevant theoretical perspectives are reviewed in section 3.2.
2.4 The Establishment of the Irish Guidance Counselling System

Alongside the growth of Social Capital Theory, the recognition of the need for pastoral care, and international movements in the area of guidance and counselling, Ireland also began to establish methods and services to address people’s needs with regard to pastoral care and guidance.

The guidance and counselling service for second-level schools was formally established by the Department of Education and Science (DES) in 1966. Literature varies to some extent regarding the main influence leading to this development. In an article entitled ‘As it was in the Beginning – A Brief History of the IGC’, Cassells describes how the County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC) are “really the pioneers of the guidance service”, as they developed a vocational guidance system for their schools in 1960. In contrast, Shiel and Lewis (1993) associate the formal establishment of the guidance and counselling service in Irish schools with the City of Dublin VEC.

This initiative (the formal establishment of the guidance and counselling service in Irish schools) followed the appointment in 1960 of the first educational psychologist with the responsibility for developing a guidance service in the schools of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC) (Shiel and Lewis, 1993: 5).

This is reinforced by the NGF report when it states,

The foundations of this formal guidance and counselling system were laid in 1960 when the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) appointed an educational psychologist (2007: 19).

There are other factors likely to have influenced the establishment of a guidance and counselling service in Ireland. Both Shiel and Lewis (1993: 5) and the ESRI report, ‘Guidance for All?’ (2006: 3) cite Chamberlain (1983) when discussing the factors leading to the establishment of the guidance and counselling service.

The formal establishment of a guidance and counselling service has been attributed to a number of factors including the rapid industrialisation that took place in Ireland during the 1960s, a slowing down in emigration, and the availability of a wider range of careers for young people (Shiel and Lewis, 1993: 5).

Before the formal establishment of the guidance and counselling service, schools recognised the social and economic developments impacting on pupils, and the need for
a guidance and counselling service had already been acknowledged informally in many schools. “The notion of providing guidance and counselling was readily accepted in schools, many of which were already doing so on an informal basis” (O’Connor and Walshe, 1979, cited in Shiel and Lewis, 1993: 6).

As mentioned previously, the County Dublin VEC developed a vocational guidance service in second level schools, but they also contributed to guidance and counselling teacher education. Cassells states, “They were also instrumental in developing the first course to train career guidance teachers in University College Dublin in 1964”. However, Shiel and Lewis (1993) state that the Diploma course in Guidance and Counselling was “established at University College Dublin in 1967” (1993: 7) and the report by the NGF (2007) states that,

The biggest influence of the time on the training of guidance counsellors was the establishment in 1969 of the one year Diploma in Guidance Counselling by the Department of Psychology in UCD (2007: 19).

Irrespective of the date it began, the Diploma in Career Guidance at UCD trained many guidance teachers throughout the years. Although this course no longer operates, it has been said that it “influenced the approach to guidance adopted in Irish post-primary schools and in many of the training courses that were set up later” (2007: 19).

An article published in the British Journal of Guidance and Counselling in 1977 states that,

The major development of guidance services in Irish schools, however, began in 1967 when University College Dublin introduced a full-time one-year postgraduate training programme leading to a diploma in Careers Guidance (Chamberlain and Delaney, 1977: 50).

It can be understood from the above that the relationship between the development of guidance counselling in secondary schools in Ireland and the establishment of guidance counsellor education programmes are in alignment with each other.

The DES’s Psychological Service, and particularly Torlach O’Conchubhair and Tony O’Gormain, are referred to by Cassells as having made significant contributions to the founding of the guidance and counselling service. He describes how articles published by O’Conchubhair and O’Gormain give us an insight into the Department’s plans for
guidance at that time. When reviewing O’Conchubhair and O’Gormain (1969) one can observe the underlying pastoral nature of guidance.

Guidance in the broad sense is much more than career or vocational advice, it sets out to help people to make the most of their opportunities and to develop as persons (O’Conchubhair and O’Gormain, 1969: 34).

A further article by Cassells (1999), ‘A Lifetime in Guidance’, reinforces the above insight into the Department’s initial thinking with regard to guidance when it states, “It became obvious that it was guidance in its broadest terms they had in mind” (1999: 10). For example, in the beginning the need for a specialist in guidance and counselling was not recognised. However, this is in contrast to today’s thinking by the Department, as the 2005 Circular 15/00, cited in the NGF report, states,

Guidance counsellors, because of their specialist training, will have primary responsibility for the provision of guidance in schools (2007: 20).

The contrast between the earlier and later views held by the DES on the influence of a specialist in guidance and counselling is evident. On the other hand, the value placed on the influence of a whole school approach to guidance is unchanged throughout the years. As Cassells puts it, “they envisaged a whole school approach to guidance, very much along the lines of the thinking today” (1999: 11). In Circular 15/00, the importance placed on a whole school approach to guidance is emphasised. “It is a whole school activity which should form an essential and integrated part of the School Plan” (2007: 21). The relationship between the whole school guidance service and the role of the guidance counsellor is explored in the literature review chapter.

2.5 Guidance Counsellor Education Programmes and Institutions

Once the formal establishment of the guidance and counselling service took place, many significant developments followed. For example, the DES started its own guidance counsellor education programme in 1968 in order to provide a guidance counselling service to schools. It was a summer programme with in-service, and it concentrated on areas such as preparation for work, guidance techniques and how to involve other members of staff, parents and the wider community in preparing young people for adult life. Cassells (1999) was among the group participating in the guidance counsellor education programme and he describes how the emphasis was on career guidance.
Guidance counsellor education programmes run by the DES had, by 1971, educated 120 people. Following this, the Association of Guidance Teachers was set up to represent those working in the area. Cassells (1999) describes how it was timely to set up the association, as the media were very interested in the whole concept of career guidance and the association’s conferences attracted large audiences. Similarly, McLeod (1998) describes a number of converging factors that were responsible for the growth of counselling in the 1970s in the United Kingdom, one of which was the media attention that guidance and counselling received. “Counselling regularly receives publicity in the media, most of which is positive” (1998: 24).

At this time, the UCD Diploma in Careers Guidance was also graduating many guidance counsellors and this programme had a strong emphasis on the counselling and educational aspects of guidance. Subjects such as organisation of education, principles of education, educational psychology and developmental psychology.

The state of guidance counselling in Ireland before 1983 appeared to be healthy, as graduates were well supported and represented through associations such as The Institute of Vocational Guidance and Counselling of Ireland and The Association of Guidance Teachers. Guidance topics were popular among the media and guidance provision compared well to international standards. As Shiel and Lewis (1993: 6) explain, “Following the introduction of the service, provision was at a relatively high level by international standards until 1983.” In 1972 the DES made provision for guidance counsellors to be appointed in addition to regular teaching staff, on an ‘ex-quota’ basis, in schools with 250 or more students. Cassells describes this as the “big breakthrough for guidance and counselling” and one of the positive outcomes it led to was an increase in guidance education programmes such as those at Mater Dei in 1973 and University College Cork in 1981. Over the years courses have been introduced in a number of additional colleges, namely the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin, and in 1997 the University of Limerick. The following table lists the variety of programmes currently offered and those that have been discontinued.
Table 2.1: Guidance Counselling Education Programmes: Past and Present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling 1 year FT</td>
<td>University College Cork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Diploma in Arts: School Guidance and Counselling 1 year FT</td>
<td>National University of Ireland, Maynooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diploma in Guidance &amp; Counselling 2 year PT</td>
<td>University of Limerick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters in Guidance Counselling 1 year PT</td>
<td>University of Limerick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters in Education (Guidance &amp; Counselling) 2 year PT Two Modes available: Mode A, Mode B. Mode B allows for initial training in guidance.</td>
<td>University of Dublin Trinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Diploma in Arts: Adult Guidance &amp; Counselling 2 years PT</td>
<td>National University of Ireland, Maynooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad Diploma/Masters in Guidance and Counselling 2 years PT</td>
<td>Dublin City University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters in Education – With a Specialism in School Guidance &amp; Counselling 1 Year</td>
<td>National University of Ireland, Maynooth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discontinued Courses**

- Masters Degree in Family Counselling – Guidance and Counselling Specialisation
- Diploma in Career Guidance/ Higher Diploma in Careers Guidance
- Diploma in Guidance and Counselling

Marino Institute of Education
University College Dublin
Mater Dei Institute

In 1973 the National Council of Guidance Services was set up to act as an overarching group for all trained personnel. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors was founded in 1976 and this brought all the associations into one organisation. Cassells comments how,

This was seen as a very important development at this time as it ensured that there was one voice articulating the concerns and needs of the guidance counsellor.

The importance of having one professional body to represent the guidance counselling profession is explored in more detail in the literature review chapter. Unfortunately, progress in terms of guidance counselling provision was to come to a standstill in 1983
by what Cassells describes as “two lethal strikes”. The DES circular M3 1/83 stated that schools with fewer than 500 students had to provide a guidance counsellor from within their quota; the ex Quota post was abandoned and the pupil teacher ratio was increased from 19:1 to 20:1 (NGF, 2007: 21). This was a huge blow to the role of the guidance counsellor at the time as provision moved from 1:250 to 1:500. However, progress has been steadily made since then. The ESRI report (2006) states that “The Institute of Guidance Counsellors is the professional body representing over 1,000 guidance practitioners” (2006: 10).

When the history of the part the Institute of Guidance Counsellors played in keeping the service alive after this 1983 body blow is written, it must give due credit to its professional approach and the dedicated work of guidance counsellors who gave a first class service in their schools, often against the odds.

As Stake once remarked, “the nature of people and systems becomes more transparent during their struggles” (Stake, 1995: 16). In 1991 a more gradual approach was adopted with a half ex-Quota post allocated to schools in the 350-499 enrolment categories. Shiel and Lewis (1993) illustrate how it was envisaged that the guidance service would be developed on a phased basis, “starting with schools at the upper end of the specified enrolment category” (1993: 6). Over the following years policies began to favour the introduction and provision of guidance services in schools and the state of guidance counselling in Ireland has very steadily improved from the “bombshell of 1983” (Cassells 1999: 7). The OECD review of career guidance policies concludes by summarising the current state of the Irish guidance counselling community:

In moving closer to a lifelong approach to the provision of career information, guidance and counselling services, Ireland has many strengths. The legislative basis is solid, there is a climate that favours initiative and experimentation, the profession is a committed one, and the services that it provides appear on the whole to be well received. (OECD, 2002: 20)

In ‘The Education Matters Yearbook’ (2007) the President of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors at the time (Frank Mulvihill) stated that,

It is the view of the IGC and the teachers’ unions that a 250:1 ratio is necessary to provide Ireland with a truly effective guidance and counselling service (Mulvihill, 2007: 95).
In order to meet the aspiration of the IGC, provision needs to increase substantially. With a ratio of 500:1 at present (with the exception of DEIS schools, ‘Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools’), the current provision (illustrated in Table 2.2 below) is unsatisfactory.

Table 2.2: Provision for Guidance Counselling in Second Level Schools (DES, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No’s</th>
<th>Guidance Hr’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000+ pupils</td>
<td>47 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900-999</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800-899</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700-799</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-699</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-599</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400-499</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-399</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-299</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;200</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From documenting the course of the development of guidance counselling in Ireland certain weaknesses can be observed, one of which is the lack of provision. In contrast, a strength of the development of guidance counselling is that needs have been documented more regularly in policies and directives in recent years. When the Irish guidance counselling community is compared with that of the United States, it is clear that both have gone through challenges. Baker and Gerler note that in the United States during “times of job shortages and threats to existing jobs, school counselling was at a loss to define itself uniformly” (2004: 17). The next section describes how the field of guidance counselling has evolved through recognition in policy documents, with the aim of addressing the guidance needs of society.
2.6 The History of Departmental Directives and Policies

The Green Paper on Education (1992) defined guidance in schools as,

...all the services, programmes and activities within a school which are aimed at helping students to achieve an understanding of themselves and their potential (Government of Ireland, 1992).

This spreads the responsibility of guidance amongst all members of the school environment. The ESRI report (2006) “perceives the service as a school-wide responsibility as well as an ongoing and developmental activity” (2006: 4). The White Paper on Education (1995), ‘Charting Our Education Future’, aims “to prepare students for adult life and to help them proceed to further education or directly to employment” (Government of Ireland, 1995: 43). It also states, “The promotion of social, personal and health education of students is a major concern for each school” (1995: 161). However, it was the Education Act in 1998 that saw a real influence on pupils’ guidance and social, personal and health education provision. Section 9 (c) of the Act states that a school shall use its available resources to,

...ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.

The ESRI report points out that “what constitutes ‘appropriate guidance’ was not discussed in the document” (2006: 5). Nonetheless, and despite its broad nature, the provision of guidance is a statutory requirement for second-level schools under the Education Act (1998), which recognises the need to “promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students”. The task of successfully implementing, monitoring and improving guidance provision began following this Act. The DES and the NCGE support enhancements in the guidance service in secondary schools alongside the advisory role of the IGC. The ESRI report describes how the NCGE was set up in 1995 to “support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education and to inform policy of the Department in the field of guidance” (2006: 10). Their ‘Guidelines for the Practice of Guidance and Counselling in Schools’ state that,

Policy formulation by the Department of Education in guidance is enhanced through a consultative process involving the partners in education inter-alia and through drawing on the services of the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE 1996: 11, 5.3).
As one of their responsibilities the NCGE consulted with the DES to provide support to guidance counsellors, particularly in the area of school guidance planning. Significant work has been done by the NCGE, IGC and DES in order to clarify the ambiguity surrounding The Education Act (1998) section 9 (c), in particular what constitutes ‘appropriate guidance’. The DES (2005) produced a document in response to the uncertainty, which outlines the role of the guidance counsellor and signifies the place of the guidance counsellor across the overall guidance plan. It is important to clearly outline the role of the guidance counsellor amongst the variety of models/subjects linking with the affective domain of education. As outlined by Marland (1974), recognition of pastoral care activities is one step forward but the real challenge lies in learning how to engage with pastoral activities. The DES 2005 ‘Guidelines for Second-Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998’, relating to students’ access to appropriate guidance, clarify and highlight many of the developments in guidance as a result of the Act. For example, they recommend that since they share the objective of promoting the students’ personal development and growth, SPHE teachers, RE (Religious Education) teachers and HSCL (Home School Community Liaison) co-ordinators should work together with guidance counsellors. The particular contribution of guidance to SPHE is in facilitating students to:

- Recognise their own talents and achievements and to identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- Develop coping strategies to deal with stress, personal and social issues and the challenges posed by adolescence and adulthood.
- Cope with the demands of school programmes, study and examinations.
- Organise the management of time for school, study, sporting and leisure activities.
- Develop interpersonal skills and awareness of the needs of others.
- Establish good patterns of decision-making and to learn how to make informed choices.
- Make successful transitions from primary to second level and from second level to further or higher education, training or directly into employment.

(DES, 2005: 9)

This outline is an example of how effective collaboration between the guidance counsellor and the SPHE subject teacher can lead to personal and social development. Furthermore, throughout the whole DES (2005) document the role of the guidance counsellor and various other pastoral care support services are clearly outlined. This document can be described as a significant stepping stone towards engaging with
pastoral care activities within the guidance plan. Although gaps in the guidance service are still evident, it must be noted that the ongoing guidance inspections and NCGE, IGC and DES support in the area of guidance have led to many positive developments and initiatives in the years since the 1998 Education Act. Examples of these national developments, as well as international advancements, are outlined in the following section.

2.7 Recent Developments
The DES (2005) describes how significant changes are taking place in economic and social structures in this country, which have important implications for the education system and for the students who are its focus. The importance of guidance and counselling in responding to these challenges is widely recognised in Government policy statements and by other national and international bodies. A full sweep of these developments is outlined by the DES (2005) as:

- The National Development Plan (NDP) 2000-2006 states that the provision of guidance and counselling in second level schools is vital to enable each pupil to gain the maximum benefit from the education system. The NDP identifies the school guidance service as a social inclusion measure within the education sector. The New Deal 1998 also supports this theme. It states that guidance plays a major preventative role in helping young people at risk to stay within the formal education system.

- The importance of lifelong guidance is emphasised by the White Paper Learning for Life - 2000, which lists it as a key support necessary for successful access and learning.

- The Commission on the Points System states that good quality, comprehensive guidance can contribute significantly to broadening the views of second-level students and their parents on diverse pathways to careers. The Commission supports the need for an effective and comprehensive guidance and counselling service in schools and considers that the provision of such a service should be viewed in terms of the right of a student to access an appropriate level of such services.

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which carried out a comparative review of national policies for career information, guidance and counselling services in 14 OECD countries, including Ireland, describes guidance within education systems as having an important role to play in laying the foundations for lifelong career development, including knowledge and competencies regarding self-awareness, the world of work, and making decisions and transitions. It defines guidance services as services that assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational
choices and to manage their careers. It stresses that effective advice and guidance on educational and training options and on links between these options and later occupational destinations can help better match individuals' learning choices to their interests, talents and intended destinations. In the OECD's view, this can help to reduce early school leaving, improve flows between different levels of education and improve transitions from education to the labour market. It states that these outcomes help to make better use of educational resources, and to increase both individual and social returns to investments in education. A report of the review was published by the OECD in 2004.

European Union Presidency Conclusions on the importance of guidance throughout life in supporting and furthering the Lisbon Agenda 10, issued after the informal meeting of the European Ministers for Education and the Commission of the European Union in Dublin on 28/29 April 2004, stress the importance of all European citizens having access to guidance services at school level and at all later life stages, as appropriate and reflecting local circumstances. The need for particular attention to be paid to early intervention with individuals and groups at risk of not completing their schooling and at risk of alienation from society is highlighted as well as the need for provision for persons with special educational needs.

In May 2004, a Resolution was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe. The Resolution highlights the need for guidance provision within the education system, especially in schools. Guidance has an essential role to play in ensuring that individuals' educational and career decisions are firmly based, and in assisting them to develop effective self-management of their learning and career paths. The Resolution stresses the role of guidance services in the prevention of early school leaving, the empowerment of individuals to manage their own learning and careers and the re-integration of early school leavers into appropriate education and training programmes. (2005: 5/6)

These policy statements have led to the emergence of discourse on a number of areas of concern within the Irish guidance counselling community. The translation of these policies into the Irish guidance counselling service is outlined in the following sections.

2.8 A Lifelong and Socially Inclusive Guidance Service

On the 5th October 2007, Minister Michael Ahern launched ‘Guidance for Life: An Integrated Framework for Guidance Services in Ireland’, the final report of the NGF. The forum was established in 2004 following a resolution that was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union. The ‘Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools’ by the DES in September 2006 states that “the Resolution highlights the need for guidance provision within the education system, especially in schools” (2006: 11). The NGF was a joint initiative of the Department of Education and Science and the
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The forum had a range of objectives such as to “ensure that guidance becomes central to the public policy and planning process in education, the labour market and social strategies” (NGF, 2007: 5). The Minister described the launch of ‘Guidance for Life’ as “a milestone in the history of guidance”. The Minister welcomed developments in guidance provision and stated how,

The report provides an opportunity for the Departments of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment to move forward in the provision of a guidance service that underpins national priorities in lifelong learning.


Guidance is recognised at national and European policy levels as fundamental to lifelong learning that supports the development of human potential, social inclusion, employability and economic prosperity (NGF, 2007: i).

The NGF report suggests a positive future for guidance and counselling in Ireland. It also recognises the value of a guidance and counselling service. This value is also recognised by the DES when it describes how changes are taking place in economic and social structures in Ireland and that these changes have important implications for students and education.

The value of guidance and counselling in responding to these challenges is widely recognised in government policy statements and by other national and international bodies (DES, 2005: 5).

The ‘Guidance for Life’ report describes developments in the provision of a lifelong guidance service in Ireland. In Ireland, guidance provision is based in the education, labour market and community sectors.

Formal guidance in the educational system is provided in:

- Post-primary schools
- Further Education colleges
- Youthreach, FÁS Community Centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres
- Third level
- Adult Educational Guidance Services

(NGF, 2007: 18)

The variety of sectors offering a guidance service in Ireland today supports the notion of lifelong guidance.
Further recent developments concerning globalisation and social change have emerged. The recognition of the role guidance can play in promoting educational and social inclusion is noted by the DES (2005). Addressing educational disadvantage, early school leaving, disability and special educational needs, non-national students, adult students and promoting inclusion are all listed as areas that guidance counsellors improve through the promotion of education and social inclusion. Education plays a key role in the promotion of a socially aware and inclusive society. The DES (2005) state that,

Now, more than ever, underachievement at school tends to result in social difficulties that can lead to a life of uncertainty, marginalisation and dependence on the structures of social assistance. Equally, a lack of formal qualifications can prevent an individual progressing into further education, training or stable employment. (2005: 10)

Irving (2005) argued that career education and guidance place too much emphasis on the instrumentalist values associated with the demands of employers and economic outcomes at the expense of social justice goals.

What is missing in current discourse is the relationship between career learning and the development of active citizens who are able to locate their understanding of self, work and opportunity within a socially just and relevant critical educative framework. (2005: 18)

An example of an effort to move beyond the discourse surrounding wider social and cultural theory and towards the development of specific educational theory and methodologies that support active citizenship is the emergence of multicultural counselling and therapy (MCT) as a method of practice for guidance counsellors. MCT is explored further in Chapter 3.

2.9 Developments in Adult Educational Guidance in Ireland

Adult guidance provision in Ireland has been described as encompassing a wide spectrum of formal and non-formal education, private practice and the public employment service (FÁS). Hearne (2009: 17) provides a detailed table that illustrates the timeline of significant developments in adult educational guidance in Ireland (1995-2009) (see Appendix 6). This table clearly documents the recognition of an adult
guidance counselling service in Ireland over a period of 14 years. Hearne (2009) states that,

In terms of adult guidance, the most noteworthy development has been the formal establishment of the AEGI in 2000 following recommendations in the DES’s policy document Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (2009: 17).

The NGF (2007: 31) refers to the ‘Report on Recent Developments in Adult Education in Ireland’ (1996). This report states that a need for support services in a number of key areas is required, one of the most important being that of a guidance and counselling service for adult learners. In addition, there is a

... growing realisation throughout Europe, that what many unemployed people require of adult education is a provision that combines education and training with a guidance and counselling service (NGF, 2007: 31).

Another document described in the NGF report (2007: 31), ‘Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education’ (1998), indicated that information provision was the main guidance activity available to date and it was generally related to recruitment. Hearne (2009: 314) describes how adult guidance practice became more deeply embedded in adult education provision during the economic boom in Ireland. She stresses that evidence-based data is required in order prove the economic worth of the adult guidance service so that service provision can meet the demands of greater numbers of adults seeking guidance. Recently the world of adult guidance has changed dramatically and the NGF report describes how there is definitely widespread agreement that the provision of guidance for adults needs to be widened to include:

..... adults who are employed as well as unemployed; adults with financial difficulties, as well as those who are earning a good income; students who are engaged in higher education; and adults who have retired as well as those who are working (2007: 10).

2.10 Guidance Enhancement Initiative

In spring 2001, the Minister for Education and Science announced a new three-year initiative, the Guidance Enhancement Initiative (GEI), with the aim of building on existing provision of guidance in schools. Under this initiative a total of 50 additional whole-time posts for guidance were allocated to second-level schools. The posts were
allocated to schools that submitted proposals which could enhance guidance for
students in disadvantaged areas, promote the uptake of science, or develop links with
local business and the community. In 2004, the GEI was extended for a further two
years and provision was made for an additional 30 full-time guidance posts. In March
2006, Minister Hanafin stated that she was pleased that the,

Guidance Enhancement Initiative (GEI) which was introduced in 2001 will
continue for the next school year – this scheme is providing the equivalent of
80 GEI posts in schools around the country.

The GEI has greatly improved the guidance provision and service in secondary schools
and in the ‘Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools’, one principal reported:

Since 2001 we have benefited from GEI. This has enabled us to expand our
guidance in junior cycle. In the last two years the number of students going to
3rd level has increased by 100% (DES, 2006: 43).

Therefore the successful influence of the GEI can be observed in schools today. The
GEI is reviewed by the Department through its Guidance Inspectors. DES (2005)
suggested that GEI schools are more likely to view guidance programme planning as a
whole school responsibility, to have initiated guidance planning in their schools and to
have guidance measures as part of the junior cycle.

2.11 The Context of the Researched: The Graduate Diploma in Guidance
Counselling at the University of Limerick

In the previous section the contextual developments leading to the establishment of
guidance counselling nationally and internationally were outlined, and the policy
documents and the need for guidance counselling education programmes were
recognised. It is now necessary to contextualise the literature specifically surrounding
the UL programme. The programme is offered as one of a variety of professional
development programmes within the Department of Education and Professional Studies
at UL. These programmes are described on the Department’s website as being
characterised by their focus on:

1. Putting personal development at the heart of professional development.
2. Developing a capacity for critical reflection and for career-long learning.
3. Enabling our graduates to contribute to justice and equality, locally and
globally.
4. Enabling our graduates to work with other professionals and as part of a team.

The Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling capitalises on this distinctiveness as its objectives, listed in the programme prospectus, are:

1. To provide practicing teachers and other relevant professionals with a recognised professional qualification in guidance counselling.

2. To support the development of a range of knowledge, skills and competencies for practitioners within a lifelong learning framework.

3. To promote self-understanding and personal insight in order to deliver an effective guidance counselling service.

As stated in Chapter 1, the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling is a two-year part-time programme. Diploma holders are qualified to work in guidance counselling settings and are recognised by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors and the DES. However, The Teaching Council require diploma holders to have a primary degree or a relevant graduate diploma in teaching in order to practice as guidance counsellors in second-level schools.

### 2.12 The Establishment of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick

A report entitled ‘Careers Guidance in Ireland’ was compiled in 1978 and made a number of recommendations in relation to the development of a programme such as the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick.

Additional courses in Ireland to train guidance personnel should be introduced as soon as possible. Special consideration should be given to the possibility of providing a suitable evening course (O’Reilly, 1978: 3, Recommendation 6).

The ‘Careers Guidance in Ireland’ report recommended specific colleges to undertake the provision of guidance counselling courses, including the National Institute for Higher Education in Limerick, which is now known as the University of Limerick. While this recommendation was eventually enforced, it was twenty years later when the first participants began the part-time course run by UL. McCarthy (1999: 2) states in a report presented at a conference for guidance counsellor course directors that, “the provision of part-time training” was one of the current trends at the time in guidance counselling education programmes. UL, NUI Maynooth and Trinity are the institutes
providing this part-time facility. The part-time aspect of the course is a significant factor as it allows participants to continue in the working environment and it eases financial worries about attending such a course. This research explores whether the part-time aspect of the programme is a significant factor for participants.

The ‘Careers Guidance in Ireland’ (1978) report recognised the need for qualified guidance counsellors, as the UCD course, which was the only course in operation at the time, had a very low output of guidance counsellors. Chamberlain and Delaney (1977) state that a survey of graduates who had completed the Diploma in Careers Guidance during the period 1968 to 1971 found that, “the total number of graduates was 73, of whom 54 returned completed questionnaires; of these, 17 were no longer actively engaged in guidance” (1977: 51). To gain more qualified guidance counsellors it was suggested that more guidance and counselling education programmes be developed.

If the need for more trained guidance personnel is to be met, additional training courses must be introduced at the earliest opportunity. The UCD course with its average annual intake of 50 candidates cannot hope to cope with the needs outlined, particularly when wastage among trained personnel is taken into account (O’Reilly, 1978: 22).

McCarthy (1999) suggests a reason why a number of guidance and counselling graduates may not be working as guidance counsellors.

The subsequent career paths of guidance diplomats led to promotions to school principals, careers and appointments officers in higher education, managers in national employment and training authorities, and government ministers (1999: 3).

With these opportunities of promotion for graduates of guidance counselling courses, the number of graduates practicing as guidance counsellors was significantly less than required. This contextual insight stemmed my interest in gaining data on, and observing the career paths of, the UL graduates. The significant advancements made in relation to in-career development for guidance counsellors and teachers may also be a factor influencing career paths of GDGC diploma holders. The DES, NCGE, TC and IGC support continued professional development opportunities for guidance counsellors. The NCGE lists providing opportunities for in-career development for guidance counsellors as one of its operating terms of reference. The NCGE provide in-career opportunities such as Academia (an exchange programme) and courses such as the Whole School Guidance Planning programme. The IGC holds an annual conference
that provides members with the opportunity to attend workshops. In addition the various branches of the IGC provide in-career development programmes based on the needs of branch members. The DES views teacher education as a continuum from initial teacher education, to induction and continuing professional development (CPD). In doing this they embrace policy formulation, co-ordination, general direction and management, quality, and financial control in supporting the provision of education and continuing support for teachers and school leaders throughout their careers. The most recent Teaching Council conference (2011) was entitled ‘A Vision for the Continuum of Teacher Education’. The Teaching Council has commissioned research on teaching for the continuum with articles from Coolahan (2007) and Conway et al. (2009) contributing to the discourse on the concept. Considering the growth of discourse surrounding in-career development for guidance counsellors and the continuum for teachers these contextual dimensions must also be considered when observing the career paths of graduates from the GDGC at UL.

The UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling was developed in response to the need for more qualified guidance counsellors, but also in response to the need for a part-time programme to be offered at a choice of locations throughout Ireland. A review of literature with regard to the participants and course content of the UL GDGC is presented in the third chapter of this document.

2.13 The Context of the Researcher

It is important to set the context of my own role as a researcher within the research. As I am a graduate of teacher education and not a graduate of a formal guidance counsellor education programme, my position within the context of the research began as an outsider to the guidance counselling community. Robson (2002: 535) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of ‘outsider’ research in comparison with ‘insider’ research. The initial positive aspect of this was that I was both objective and in an ethically neutral position to examine the guidance counselling education programme; on the other hand, I needed to understand and learn about the guidance counselling community before I could decide on certain methodological issues such as the appropriate research tools to utilise with guidance counsellors.
I used two strategies to strengthen my position as an outsider to the research. Firstly, constructing this context chapter has moved me closer to the nature of the research as it has increased my understanding and awareness of the guidance counselling community. Secondly, I am applying reflexivity throughout conducting the research in order to challenge my role as the researcher. Reflexivity involves immediate, dynamic and continuing self-awareness and the concept is explored further in Chapter 4. Finlay and Gough (2003) describe how reflexivity can be used when trying to recognise the context of the research:

Researchers, especially within the qualitative tradition, who are keen to acknowledge the situated nature of their research and to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their findings, are seeking new tools. Using reflexivity, they find that subjectivity in research can be transformed from problem to opportunity (2003: ix).

In the context of this study, reflexivity led to an awareness of the subjective needs of the researcher when considering the context of the researched. I (the researcher) understood from the early stages of the research that I had subjective reasons for undertaking the research. The following extract is taken from my reflective journal.

On analysis of Rogers’ personal comments in relation to undertaking research I find myself reflecting on my own methodological stance.

“So I have come to recognise that the reason I devote myself to research, and to the building of theory, is to satisfy a need for perceiving order and meaning, a subjective need which exists in me (Rogers 1967: 20)”.

I feel I began this research conscious of the professional reward I could get from completing it; however, now as I am getting to a place of depth within the research process I understand I too have subjective needs which this research can potentially address. Significantly, I am now conscious of the need I have to explore and gain order in relation to the standards of support and guidance offered to people. I have a personal desire to explore both my varied experience and the experiences of others which I have observed in relation to the support service offered by the guidance counsellor. Why do certain guidance counsellors not engage with students’ needs? Questions about this experience have always been unconsciously within me; however, through engaging with reflection, personal development and exploring my methodological approach I have developed my reflexive skills and allowed myself the freedom to become conscious of my subjective needs.

Hearne (2009: 26) explains how outsider research may be valued for its objectivity. However, in the context of my outsider researcher role, subjective needs are also
Chapter Two – Context of Research

evident. Including and understanding the context of the researcher has value for both the reader and the researcher.

2.14 Conclusion
This chapter has set the context of the broad community of guidance counselling, the specific background of the researched, and the nature of the researcher. In this chapter an understanding of the development of the guidance counselling profession in Ireland has emerged. In summation, significant contextual learning has been gained in the following areas:

1. The importance of the provision of a contextual aspect to an evaluation study in order to add to its robustness. Extending evaluation models to include context, input, process and output factors is of huge value as understanding the context can potentially strengthen the research.

2. There is an incongruence between past wider societal and educational values of Consensualism, Classical Humanism and Human Capital Theory, and the concept of Social Capital Theory leading to the evolution of pastoral care and affective education, where guidance counselling is placed. The values which people live by are reflected in key policy documents and practice.

3. The relationship between the Irish guidance community and its links with religious values and practice can be observed.

4. The importance of documenting the historical narrative of the guidance counselling community, as this understanding constructs the lens through which individuals interpret the profession.

5. Recent discourse surrounds developments such as inclusion, multiculturalism, and lifelong guidance. Developments in guidance counselling are well represented in policy documents but ensuring these policies come into play has been problematic in the past. The focus must now be on enabling guidance practitioners to comprehend and provide a service that reflects recent policy development.
6. The significance of the part-time aspect of the GDGC at UL and the career paths of graduates have emerged as interesting areas for further exploration.

7. Nationally and internationally guidance counselling has been recognised as a means of responding to people’s needs. The context of guidance counselling in Ireland and across Europe is changing rapidly relative to people’s increasing needs.

The next chapter focuses on literature surrounding the role of the guidance counsellor and the competencies that guidance counsellors are required to display. Different types of guidance counsellor education programmes are also reviewed.
CHAPTER THREE – LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction
The previous chapter provided a contextual review of literature surrounding the development of guidance counselling. This chapter sets out to explore the complexity of and discourses surrounding the role of the guidance counsellor, from initial education to establishing a professional identity. The chapter begins by providing an in-depth review of the definitions of, or perspectives on (as I prefer to refer to them), the term ‘guidance counselling’ offered by leading authors in the guidance counselling community. The variety of understandings of the term ‘guidance counselling’ is extensive and suggests a lack of clarity that clients and pupils using a guidance counselling service must overcome. In order to provide a foundation for further exploration of the key issues reviewed in this chapter, a review of literature surrounding the theoretical perspectives underpinning guidance counselling is presented. The role of the guidance counsellor within the three-dimensional (personal and social, educational, and vocational) guidance counselling service is discussed as are the skills and competencies required by the guidance counsellor. The discourse surrounding the professional identity of the guidance counsellor is critically analysed. In addition, this chapter provides insights into international guidance counselling communities in order to ascertain comparative contexts for this research.

Sources relevant to the broader theoretical aspects of the literature review were accessed in many forms such as books, textbooks, academic journals and electronic journals. However, in order to review the existing discourse surrounding the complexities of the key issues emerging, the literature search was extended to include policy documents and professional publications such as occasional papers, newsletters and conference proceedings. The most recent and relevant literature on the Irish guidance counselling sector includes ESRI (2006), NGF (2007), NCGE (2004), DES (2009), and IGC (2008). The main focus of Irish guidance counselling literature is on the second-level guidance counselling service, with limited literature on the education of guidance counsellors. However, a study by O’Leary et al (1994) does offer an understanding of an element of guidance counsellor education, the personal growth of trainee guidance counsellors. David Mearns’ book ‘Person-Centred Counselling Training’ (1997) concentrated solely
on the principles, practices and requirements of educating person-centred counsellors. Hazel Johns (1998) has written about ‘Personal Development in Counsellor Training’ and the implications of guidance counsellor self-knowledge. Further international literature on guidance counsellor education does exist and will be drawn upon in this chapter. Areas of interest and relevance to the research are reviewed with the objective of gaining an in-depth understanding of the guidance counsellor and guidance counsellor education programmes.

3.1 Understanding the Term ‘Guidance Counselling’

A number of varying definitions exist for the phrase ‘guidance counselling’. This section will present the span of definitions offered throughout current literature. Following a critique of the varying national perspectives of guidance counselling offered I will clearly indicate which definition I shall embrace throughout this thesis. At the outset I must acknowledge the ambiguous vocabulary (Kidd, 2006: 3) that surrounds the area under discussion; for example, the terms ‘guidance counselling’, ‘educational guidance’, ‘vocational guidance’, ‘career guidance’, and ‘career counselling’ are all used. The term ‘guidance counselling’ is most appropriate for this document, as the programme under research is called a ‘Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling’. Doyle (2001) explains that ‘guidance’ connotes care and self-discipline in the professional task whereas ‘counselling’ is a learning process of exploring, clarifying and re-creating personal meaning.

Internationally, Sultana (2004) describes how guidance is defined in various ways across Europe; however, essentially,

The term is used to refer to a set of interrelated activities that have, as a goal, the structured provision of information and assistance to enable individuals and groups, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make choices on educational, training, and occupational trajectories and to manage their life paths effectively (2004: 24).

This definition, along with many offered in the international context, is useful in that it is broad enough to encompass guidance across the life span; however, it is strongly focused on the career aspect of guidance. When beginning to critique the definitions offered for guidance counselling in Ireland, the first obstacle to be overcome is that
much of Irish guidance counselling literature refers to guidance that encompasses counselling. For example, the NGF report (2007: 27) explains that while recognising that guidance provision in schools involves a range of guidance and counselling activities and services, and that the terms ‘guidance counselling’ and ‘guidance and counselling’ are frequently used, the NCGE document ‘Planning the School Guidance Programme’ used the term ‘guidance’ for simplicity. They stress that it encompasses a broad range of activities to help students make choices, including counselling, assessment, information, advice, educational development programmes, personal and social development programmes, and referral. With this simplicity in mind, the NCGE document ‘Planning the School Guidance Programme’ defines guidance as,

A range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to make choices (personal and social, educational and career) about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices. These choices may be categorised into three separate but interlinked areas; personal and social, educational and career (2004: 8).

McCoy et al. (2006: 2), reflecting on the above definition, state that, “In other words, the term characterises the complex role the guidance counsellor has in Irish schools”. The complexity of the guidance counsellor role is evident. Minister Mary Hanafin, addressing delegates at the Annual Conference on the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in 2006, described how, “The role of the guidance counsellor is changing with new challenges faced by students in schools”. Ms Hanafin also put it to the guidance counsellors that,

Each of you, in your role as guidance counsellors, plays a pivotal role in preparing students for the challenges that they face in the future (Hanafin, 2006).

Both McCoy et al. (2006) and Hanafin (2006) present an interpretation of guidance where responsibility lies with the guidance counsellor in the school setting. Essentially, the NCGE definition of ‘guidance’ could be interpreted as being offered by a range of providers in a variety of settings. The most utilised and relevant legislative reference to guidance counselling in Ireland further contributes to the lack of clarity.

A school shall use its available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices (Education Act, 1998, section 9 (c)).
The main question raised by this piece of legalisation, as discussed in Chapter 2, is what exactly is ‘appropriate guidance’? Does it include counselling? A definition sets out to provide a clear meaning for a term. Therefore one could argue that ‘perspectives of guidance’ are being offered rather than definitions, as they are open to interpretation. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, I prefer to refer to perspectives on guidance counselling rather than definitions. Wannan and McCarthy (2005) present a perspective on ‘guidance’ that shares responsibility amongst a variety of settings. This perspective was adopted in the EU Council Resolution on ‘Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices for Guidance throughout Life in Europe’ in May 2004, which states that,

 Guidance refers to a range of activities that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives (lifelong) to identify their capacities, competencies and interests, to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competencies are learned and/or used (lifewide). Guidance is provided in a range of settings: education, training, employment, community and private (Wannan and McCarthy, 2005: 11).

This perspective shares the responsibility of ‘guidance’ and considers it as a lifelong concept; however, the counselling process of ‘guidance’ is not directly mentioned in this perspective either. Kidd (2006: 1) describes the place of personal non-work-related problems in career counselling settings. Kidd indicates that a definition of career counselling should acknowledge the interdependence between work and non-work activities. Similarly, one could argue a definition of guidance counselling should acknowledge the interdependence between work and non-work activities.

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (2007: 3) illustrate in diagrammatic form the components of an Irish guidance and counselling service and programme in Irish post-primary schools (see Figure 3.1).
Remit of Guidance Counsellor with whole school support

**Key Services:**


Involves whole school staff, including Guidance Counsellor where appropriate to School Guidance Plan.

Includes SPHE, elements of CSPE, LCA, and LCVP. All subject teachers can contribute.

Whole School Curricular Guidance Programme (NCCA, 2007)

Guidance and Counselling Service (Education Act, 1998)

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**Figure 3.1:** A whole school guidance service and curriculum: roles and relationships (The Irish Guidance Service, 2007: 3)
Any perspective on guidance counselling therefore needs to be broad enough to reflect the three dimensions of personal, vocational, and career guidance; should acknowledge the whole guidance community that offers a guidance service to lifelong learners; and be in alignment with legislation.

Having considered a variety of perspectives, the understanding of ‘guidance’ employed for consistency in this thesis is the one offered by the NGF as follows:

Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society (2007: 6).

The focus of this perspective is on the responsibility of the client in the guidance process. It also acknowledges the need for a lifelong guidance facilitation service in order to address personal, educational and career potentials. In addition, the understanding is clear about what guidance can do and it places the client centrally in the guidance process. The strengths of an emerging international perspective on guidance counselling in terms of its clarity and inclusive dimension are also included. Theoretically the perspective is well placed in the context of Social Capital Theory.

3.2 Theoretical Orientation

Having critically analysed a number of different perspectives on ‘guidance counselling’ it is necessary to explore the variety of dimensions to the theoretical, and political, orientations of guidance counselling. Theoretical orientations can be observed in terms of counselling theory, career theory and post-modern models of guidance counselling. The theoretical perspectives that contribute to guidance counselling have been drawn from a number of disciplines, such as psychology, education, sociology and labour economics. It is important to acknowledge that, as Corey (2008: 1) puts it, “no one theory has ‘the truth’, but each may have something to offer you”. This section has been informed by the following OECD (2004) comment in order to concentrate the review on the most prevalent approaches to guidance counselling:

Historically, psychology, principally differential and developmental, has had a major influence on guidance, using one-to-one interviews and psychometric testing as its central tools (OECD, 2004; 19).
This section will attempt to provide a foundation of theoretical knowledge by reviewing the key assumptions and limitations of a selection of the main theoretical concepts utilised by the guidance counselling community, although it is acknowledged that many other perspectives exist. In the broad sense, Watts and Kidd (2000: 490) describe how a clear distinction can be made between the directive and reactive approaches of the first half of the twentieth century, which were used in career guidance in the form of assessment and advice giving, and the non-directive and proactive approaches of the later part of the century, which changed the guidance counselling dynamic to a facilitative role of decision making with the client.

In the following section the strengths and limitations of the many counselling approaches will be reviewed. I review theory in relation to counselling approaches, as Kidd (2006: 2) describes how career counselling could be seen as an extension of therapeutic counselling. Career theory and more recent theoretical perspectives and approaches to counselling and career guidance are discussed.

3.3 Counselling Theory and Approaches

The aim of this section is to provide an account of the complex theories and approaches associated with the counselling aspect of guidance counselling. The NCCA (2007) describe counselling as having its objectives in the empowerment of students so that they can make decisions, solve problems, address behavioural issues, develop coping strategies, and resolve difficulties they may be experiencing. McLeod defines counselling as “a form of helping that is focused on the needs and goals of the person” (1998: 10). He also describes the complexity of counselling theory:

Counselling is in many respects an unusual area of study, in that it encompasses a set of strongly competing theoretical perspectives, a wide range of practical applications and meaningful inputs from a number of contributing disciplines (1998: 10).

The first approach to counselling reviewed in this chapter is the psychodynamic approach, derived from the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalytic theory or psychoanalysis depends on understanding how the mind works. Freud, who is thought to be the founder of the theory, compared the human mind to an iceberg, with
only a small amount of it being visible (observable behaviour), but believed that it is the unconscious mind that has the fundamental influence on human behaviour. Freud described human personality as a dynamic mechanism consisting of the ‘id’, the ‘ego’ and the ‘superego’: the ‘id’ being the instinctive needs and desires of a person present from birth; the ‘ego’ being responsible for dealing with reality and meeting needs of the ‘id’ in a socially acceptable way; and the ‘superego’ being the moral principles and ideals acquired from parents and society. The key assumptions made by Freud are summarised by McLeod:

(a) Emotional problems have their origins in childhood experiences.
(b) People are usually not conscious of the true nature of these experiences.
(c) Unconscious material emerges indirectly in counselling through the transference reaction to the counsellor and in dreams and fantasy.  

(McLeod 1998: 59)

The role of the counsellor during this process is to interpret unconscious mental content to enable the client to achieve insight. Other theorists such as Jung and Adler were dubious of many important aspects of Freud’s theory, such as his emphasis on the sexual nature of unconscious memories. However, the fact that many of Freud’s ideas have stood the test of time and remain widely known suggests that, despite limitations, they still have value. Robert D. Nye (1999) critically compares perspectives from Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, Skinner’s radical behaviourism and Rogers’ humanistic views. In doing so he describes how Freud was sceptical about the possibilities for human happiness and that he was pessimistic about the future due to the destructive qualities within humans (1999: 2).

The next approach to counselling theory presented in this section is the cognitive-behavioural approach, which has developed out of progressions in behavioural and cognitive psychology. McLeod (1998) describes the behavioural element of the approach:

The behavioural origins of the approach emphasize processes of learning through operant and classical conditioning, direct observation of behaviour and a scientific attitude to monitoring behavioural change (McLeod 1998: 85).

Skinner’s radical behaviourism is widely recognised as an original source of the behavioural approach. Nye (1999: 3) describes how Skinner’s ideas contrasted greatly
with Freud’s as he placed emphasis on external conditions as causes of behaviour. Skinner warned that our society is in danger of being overwhelmed by its problems because of our failure to establish the external conditions that consistently strengthen and maintain beneficial behaviours (Nye, 1999: 3). Beck and Ellis took this concept one step further and influenced the introduction of the cognitive dimension to the behavioural approach. They are said to have done this through attention to dysfunctional thought processes and irrational beliefs. In the 1950s Ellis developed what was first known as rational therapy; by 1993 he had changed the name to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) (Corey 2008: 275). For the main part,

Cognitive-behavioural counsellors advocate a purposeful, structured approach, drawing on a wide range of specific techniques such as homework assignments, relaxation exercises, self-monitoring and relapse prevention (McLeod, 1998: 85).

The main assumption of this approach is that people contribute to their own psychological problems by the way they interpret situations, and that by having a framework or method for identifying irrational beliefs people can replace ineffective ways of thinking with rational cognitions. The limitations of cognitive-behavioural approaches are documented by Corey (2008: 284). He indicates that as the therapy does not encourage clients to recount painful early experiences it does not work through restrictive influences in order for clients to free themselves. Cognitive-behavioural therapy also plays down the importance of the client and therapist relationship, which is widely noted as an essential ingredient for a successful therapeutic relationship. However, one can see the benefit of using the therapy once past experiences have been explored and certain short-term rational behaviour may need to be addressed.

The third approach to counselling theory presented in this section is the person-centred approach. This approach is largely linked with Carl Rogers’ theory of counselling, described as “largely rooted in humanistic philosophy” (Corey, 2008: 10). Rogers’ theory differs from psychoanalytic theory and behaviourism in significant ways. Nye describes how Rogers disagreed with Freud’s view that humans are motivated primarily by sexual and aggressive drives.

He asserted that fully functioning persons want to fulfill and enhance all their potentialities and that it is pessimistic and limiting to assume that sex and aggression are the most basic forces within us (1999: 3).
Rogers, while recognising that external conditions are important, also challenged Skinner’s ideas as he felt strongly that a person’s feelings and self-concept play a vital role in determining behaviour. McLeod (1998) describes how,

Person-centred counselling is informed by phenomenological thinking and emphasizes the self-concept of the person and the capacity for growth and fulfillment (McLeod, 1998: 110).

Corey (2008: 10) explains that this approach assumes that clients have the capacity for self-direction without active intervention and direction on the therapist’s part. Rogers does, however, describe how the relationship between the client and therapist should be that of a helping relationship. Three personal characteristics or attitudes of the therapist form the centre of the therapeutic relationship; these are (1) congruence or genuineness, (2) unconditional positive regard and acceptance, and (3) accurate empathic understanding. Rogers (1967: 33) stated that,

If I can provide a certain type of relationship, the other person will discover within himself or herself the capacity to use that relationship for growth and change, and personal development will occur.

The person-centered process has the potential for deep lifelong change and understanding to occur. Limitations of person-centered therapy reflect the limitations created by outside influences in terms of time and funding constraints. The time involved in creating the helping relationship is immeasurable. Another aspect of the theory that can be viewed as either a limitation or strength is the dependence on the therapist to have the ability to play their role in the helping relationship. Mearns and Thorne (2007: 45) describe how,

For the person-centered counsellor the ability to accept and affirm herself is, in fact, the cornerstone for her therapeutic practice and in its absence the usefulness of the helping relationship will be grossly impaired.

Therefore the relationship the counsellor has with him or herself largely determines the quality of the work they do with clients. Having a self-accepting and affirming relationship with oneself requires a long-term commitment to personal development and self-exploration. Mearns and Thorne (2007: 43) note how those who embrace the person-centered orientation are letting themselves in for a particularly rigorous discipline. O’Leary et al (1994) conducted a study that included 10 females enrolled in a one-year full-time Diploma in Guidance Counselling. The course is described as being
primarily orientated towards the training of school counsellors (1994: 4). The personal
growth component of the education programme involved an experiential group
consisting of structured developmental exercises, using a person-centered philosophy.
The level of self-esteem and awareness exhibited by the trainee counsellors following
the personal growth exercises significantly increased. In conclusion to this study
O’Leary et al (1994) state,

Five significant components of growth were identified, namely self-awareness,
congruence, spirituality, attention to positive and negative feelings, and the
perception of growth as a dynamic process. The study provides some support
for the effectiveness of personal growth groups as part of trainee counsellors’
training (1994: 8).

Guidance counsellor personal growth and person-centered counselling converge in
practice. Mearns (1997) discusses the importance of training in the person-centred
counselling field:

Person-centered counselling is not simply about ‘learning how to do it’, it
requires a considerable attention to personal development since it is the ‘Self’
of the counsellor that is the central ingredient in the endeavour (1997: xi).

Johns (1998) outlines how self-knowledge is the key to person-centred counselling. The
effect of personal development on a guidance counsellor following a year of initial
training is clearly evident in this quotation:

*I’m 39 and when I started the course, I thought I had life and me fairly well
sorted-out. I’ve learned a lot this year about skills and clients and theories, but
I’ve discovered far more than I expected about myself – and some of it has
really surprised me* (Extract from a trainee’s personal statement, Johns, 1998:
1).

Personal development is sometimes undervalued in guidance counsellor education
programmes but Johns (1998: 5) describes how essential it is for the guidance
counsellor to have an ‘examined life’. Interestingly, Johns suggests the key issue in
counselling training is the need “to identify the particular ways in which personal
development for counsellors is purposeful, specialised and more intensive” (1998: 6).
Furthermore, she outlines the role of the trainer or lecturer in the personal development
process as key, as they model attitudes, values and understandings and the
stimulus/energy they provide are at the heart of personal development training (1998:
15). The discourse surrounding the value of personal development in guidance
counselling education programmes and the centrality of the role of the trainer in the success or otherwise of personal development have emerged as interesting themes for further exploration.

In summary to the three dimensions of counselling I have explored, I feel the main strength of counselling lies in the work of Rogers’ person-centered perspective as it is not restricted by boundaries in that it allows and supports overlap or change in terms of the theoretical framework a therapist or client chooses to use. The value in correctly exploring person-centered theory lies in theoretical learning and, more importantly, personal development. Corey (2008: 204) describes how Rogers warned that too much loyalty to a method, a school of thought, or a technique could have a counterproductive effect on the counselling process.

The advice he often gave to students in training and followed in his own life was, ‘There is one best school of therapy. It is the school of therapy you develop yourself based on a continuing critical examination of the effects of your way of being in the relationship’.

Combining all the dimensions of a counselling process that the therapist feels are appropriate for the individual client could potentially provide the basis for a successful and comprehensive therapy. Corey (2008: 4) describes the importance of guidance counselling students gaining a robust understanding of counselling theory and practice. Nye (1999: 2) indicates that theoretical disagreements among psychologists are actually signs of the profession’s good health. They show that psychologists are often unwilling to settle for a quick consensus and willing to take positions that they know will arouse criticisms. Corey notes,

Counselling students can begin to acquire a counselling style tailored to their own personality by familiarizing themselves with the major approaches to therapeutic practice (Corey, 2008: 4).

In the UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling, both personal development and the various counselling styles are facilitated. The extent to which they are facilitated will be explored in the study.
3.4 Career Theory and Approaches

According to Killeen (1996: 23), “Career theory is a source of guidance strategies and techniques, and can offer a rationale for guidance to those who control its destiny”. Killeen (1996: 12) notes that it is being repeatedly asked whether the term ‘career’ any longer has meaning. Career theories, if understood and utilised correctly, are described as having a central role in highlighting the value and place of ‘career’.

Theories are useful if they help us to interpret careers seeing them in ways which, without the theory would remain invisible to us (1996: 41).

Awareness of the many dimensions of career theory, rather than a reliance on a particular career theory, enables guidance counsellors to strengthen career practice. In the Irish second-level context an over-reliance on trait-and-factor theory, in particular psychological testing using the DATs (Differential Aptitude Tests), is evident. Law (1996: 46) describes how “career-development theory is not unitary”:

Both trait-and-factor and self-concept theories substantially understand career in psychological terms, whereas opportunity-structure and community-interaction theories are more strongly expressed in sociological terms (Law, 1996: 49).

Law outlines four broad types of theory: self-concept, opportunity-structure, community-interaction and trait-and-factor. Self-concept theories are described as theories that consider the individual circumstance when suggesting career paths. Super (1957) states that,

The ‘self-concept’ connotes a more interactive self, developing through life stages, and – in so doing – experiencing changing motivations and other feelings about work (Super, 1957 cited in Law, 1996: 47).

Hughes and Gration (2009: 13) describe the emergence of a lifelong approach to career:

Where ‘career’ was once thought of as a single commitment to a lifelong occupational pursuit, it is now thought of as a lifelong journey whereby individuals participate in differing learning and work roles.

The concept that social arrangement is an important determinant of career-related life is a central feature of opportunity-structure theories. Killeen (1996: 3) discusses how social context is unconnected from working life and careers. Similarly, community-interaction theories place the community as the social arrangement that determines
career choice. Law (1996: 48) describes how these theories lend themselves to the concept that “people are thought of not so much as choosing work as being chosen for it”. Finally,

Trait-and-factor theories offer foreground significance to specifically identified features of the self, such as abilities and personal orientations (1996: 47).

Psychometric testing is based on trait-and-factor theories, which Kidd (2006: 14) states forms the basis of Parsons’ (1909) and Holland’s (1966) ‘person-environment fit’ theory in vocational psychology. Murphy and Davidshofer (2005: 3) define a ‘psychological test’ as a measurement instrument that consists of a sample of behaviour obtained under standardised conditions and evaluated using established scoring rules. ‘Standardisation’ implies uniformity of procedure in administering and scoring of the test (Anastasi and Urbina, 1997: 12). The test may come as one piece or may comprise several parts (for example the DATs) forming a battery of tests. Unfortunately, one feature that all psychological tests share is their limited precision. This is true of many directive perspectives on career guidance:

They rarely provide exact, completely accurate decisions about individuals because of the degree of variables that can affect human behaviour and performance (Murphy and Davidshofer, 2005: 5).

For this reason, psychological testing is highly controversial and can have major implications for an individual, warranting a high degree of competence from guidance counsellors when choosing, scoring, interpreting and communicating the results of a test.

Appropriate education regarding implementing assessment tools is essential for a guidance counsellor. The NCGE (2009) spring news article on the ‘Recognition of Competence in Psychometric Testing’ describes the importance of gaining Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) training and certification. The article refers to the Irish policy on psychometric test use as follows:

A competent test user will use tests appropriately, professionally, and in an ethical manner, paying due regard to the needs and rights of those involved in the testing process, the reasons for testing, and the broader context in which testing takes place. This outcome will be achieved by ensuring that the test user has the necessary competencies to carry out the testing process, and the knowledge and understanding of tests and test use that inform and underpin this process (2009: 9).
According to the NCGE (1998), the role of psychometric assessment in schools can be described as providing:

1. **Description**: to provide additional and relevant information about a pupil or group of pupils.
2. **Prediction**: to provide additional and relevant information on potential school performance and career goals of pupils.
3. **Change**: to obtain feedback on the effects of a particular guidance activity, e.g., counselling, classroom work.
4. **Motivation**: to help students set educational and vocational goals.
5. **Understanding**: to improve guidance counsellor, teacher, parent and pupil understanding of particular issues.
6. **Choices**: to help pupils make immediate choices, e.g., subjects, levels, programmes, courses, etc. (NCGE 1998: 7)

Different instruments are used depending on the attribute being measured. For example, ‘tests’ are instruments that measure maximum performance, or how well you can do something, e.g., intelligence, aptitude and achievement tests. ‘Inventories’ are instruments that solicit a preference or viewpoint from the client, e.g., measurement of interest, values, and personality. Second-level students are faced with a number of important decisions in relation to their career and these instruments are specifically designed to help with such decisions. A review carried out by the DES identified that the majority of Irish guidance counsellors’ time is spent dealing with decisions in relation to careers (see Figure 3.2).
Furthermore, in this DES review principals were asked if their school had a designated budget for guidance and to indicate the amount. Only 32% responded to this question, indicating perhaps that the majority of principals do not allocate a specific budget to the guidance service. Of the 32%, a budget of €1,000 or less was indicated and almost half of the 124 schools reported having less than €500. The cost of psychometric tests is a central limitation to their function. The most utilised psychometric test in Irish secondary schools is the Differential Aptitude Tests (DATs). The DATs for Guidance are a number of tests designed to measure students’ ability to learn or to succeed in a number of different areas. The tests have two levels: Level 1 is intended for Junior Cycle students and Level 2 for Senior Cycle students and adults. The tests assess eight aptitudes: verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, abstract reasoning, perceptual speed and accuracy, mechanical reasoning, space relations, spelling, and language usage (The Psychological Corporation, 1995). The DATs is a standardised psychometric test that is said to serve many specific functions in educational and career guidance, including:

- Helping students to choose educational and career options on the basis of their strengths and weaknesses.
- Helping students to understand why they do well or poorly in some subjects.
Motivating an underachiever by identifying strengths which were underestimated or unrecognised.

Suggesting new and expanding career options consistent with tested abilities.

Changing a student’s occupational direction or raising their level of occupational aspirations (1995: 30).

Taking part in the DATs battery gives each student exposure to the process of doing a psychometric test. This may be a useful experience for some students, as many employers now use psychometric tests to support recruitment and promotion processes. The DATs results may complement or contradict the guidance counsellor’s perception of a student and (in the latter case) stimulate exploration of new, previously unconsidered areas. Scores can be used to produce a profile showing a pupil’s strengths and weaknesses; results could also help motivate students who appear to be underperforming in school exams.

Level 2 of the DATs for Guidance was normed for Ireland in 1997 (NCGE, 1999). Though having Irish norms is a strength of the DATs, 14 years have passed since this process. During this time the Irish population profile has changed due to significant immigration from African and Eastern European countries and as a result DATs norm comparisons can be said to be somewhat unreliable. Considering this the use of the test is questionable and omitting or reducing the anxiety around the procedure must be a priority for the guidance counsellor. Hughes and Gration (2009: 13) observe,

Essentially, the process of matching talents to opportunities is a ‘hit-and-miss affair’, and there are vast economic, social and human consequences.

The IGC discuss how,

Many guidance counsellors administer Aptitude and Interest tests to assist students in their decision-making process. Ethical considerations and good practice dictates that test results be explored with students on an individual basis in a counselling context. (2007: 7)

This clearly indicates the alignment required between career guidance and counselling processes. Having now reviewed literature surrounding approaches to both counselling and career theory, a significant overlap between the two areas is evident. Even within career theory, recognition of the counselling process is made. This presents the argument for a post-modern theoretical approach to guidance counselling.
3.5 The Post-Modern Theoretical Approach to Guidance Counselling

Hearne (2010: 44) suggests that alternative paradigms, such as constructivist approaches, are now proposed in order to enable clients to negotiate the changing nature of education, employment, and social structures on an ongoing basis in the future. A constructivist approach is a stance that supports personal meaning and self-management. It is a process that supports transitions across the lifespan, helping people to develop skills for lifelong career management and to negotiate personal/educational/employment aspects of their life. It is described as the way forward by authors in career theory such as Young (2004); Savickas (2000); and McMahon (2006). Savickas (2000) states how,

Constructivist meta-theory has already produced three compelling models for expanding and improving career theory and practice: the personal construct, biographical-hermeneutic and the narrative models of career counselling. (2000: 60)

As indicated in the introduction to theoretical orientations above, career guidance is seen as a form of counselling. From a theoretical perspective then, should the perspectives of guidance counsellors be constructivist in nature in order to provide the best service to clients? From the counselling theoretical perspective a process of selecting concepts and methods from a variety of systems, known as ‘integration’, is now promoted. Corey (1996: 449) explains how this approach recognises that no single theory is comprehensive enough to account for the complexities of human behaviour. Corey calls for theoretical integration as the basis for future counselling practice. Similarly, Baker and Gerler (2004: 41) suggest a ‘balanced approach’ to guidance counselling. It is recognised that for the guidance counsellor the way forward is a blended approach in terms of psychological and sociological theoretical approaches. The literature review on theoretical orientations in guidance counselling showed convergence of both perspectives, acknowledging the personal dimension of the human. Divergence is also noted in relation to the terminology surrounding the career and counselling communities. If guidance counselling is to take a modern perspective in terms of theoretical orientation then should there not be a place for literature, textbooks and resources under the heading of guidance counselling? From conducting this literature review I understand how guidance counsellors must select from career or counselling theory literature but are limited in guidance counselling literature. McMahon and Patton (2006: 10) discuss how one of the criticisms of constructivism is
that it has failed to clearly articulate an approach that may be used by career counsellors. In an attempt to provide a conceptual and practical map for career counselling McMahon and Patton (2006) present The Systems Theory Framework (STF). This meta-theoretical framework provides an understanding of career development that is consistent with the emerging constructivist position on career development and on career counselling, and is

... responsive to holistic understandings about career, the inseparability of career and life, debate about the fusion of counselling and personal counselling (e.g., Krumboltz, 1993; Manuele-Adkins, 1992; Subich, 1993), and also addresses concerns about a gulf between career theory and practice (e.g., Osipow, 1996) (McMahon and Patton, 2006: 94).

It is stated clearly by McMahon and Patton (2006: 95) that STF is not a theory of career development but rather represents a meta-theoretical account of career development that accommodates career theories derived out of “the logical positivist worldview with their emphasis on holism, personal meaning, subjectivity and recursiveness between influences”. Essentially STF provides a map to guide career counsellors as they encourage clients to narrate the details and reality of their own maps through the telling of their career stories.
The need for more developed, constructive theoretical orientations has been acknowledged. The recognition of interculturalism and the need for intercultural counselling has been documented by authors such as O’Rourke (2002) who suggested that,

We need to address a variety of multicultural issues of race, language, religion and culture if we are to resonate with these intercultural changes and recognise fully the necessity of awareness of cultural factors in therapy (2002: 1).
McMahon and Patton (2006: 107) describe how STF’s utility is becoming increasingly apparent. One of the reasons listed for its usefulness is its contribution to multicultural career counselling. In Corey (2005) the movement toward creating a separate multicultural theory of counselling and therapy is recognised:

I believe current theories can and should be expanded to incorporate a multicultural component. As I have consistently pointed out in this book, if contemporary theories do not account for the cultural dimension, they will have limited applicability in working with culturally diverse client populations (2005: 465).

The STF map is an example of a modern attempt at theoretical integration that is inclusive of the cultural dimension.

Similarly, Niles et al. (2011) offer a creative, innovative and useful book ‘Career Flow: A hope centred approach to career development’ for addressing career challenges in the 21st century. This book highlights the importance of ‘hope’ as a base for all aspects of career development: self reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting and planning, implementing and adapting. Niles (2011) indicates how learning these competencies will serve students throughout their lifetime.

Having a realistic attitude toward work and possessing the requisite skills for handling the challenges you will undoubtedly experience will help you to be a positive employee and to experience maximal work satisfaction. In other words, your attitude and skills will go a long way in determining the outcome of your work behaviour; that is, whether you are successful (2011: 3).

The ‘career flow’ metaphor described by Niles et al. (2011) is understood with respect to both white-water (high demand times) and still-water (low demand times) experiences. The challenge is to develop strategies for creating the conditions for optimal flow work experiences and for coping effectively with less than optimal flow work experiences. Each chapter in the book provides objectives, a case example, tips, activities, questions for reflection, and additional resources so that students can master the diverse aspects of their career flow. Niles et al. (2011) provide a practical book that recognises the importance of skills gained through counselling, such as self-clarity, in order to gain career flow. The metaphor stretches beyond a single theoretical orientation to a model of practice for career development that considers interests, skills, personality style, values, and social, emotional and financial support. Each of these elements is presented alongside their respective theoretical stance. For example, the work of John
Holland (1997) is described within the chapter on pursuing your interests. In conclusion to the chapter an exercise that considers John Holland’s concepts is provided. Therefore Niles et al. (2011) are providing a book that aligns theory and practice while using the creative metaphor of career flow.

In the context of counselling literature Corey (2005 and 2008) introduces concepts and techniques that can be drawn upon for an integrative approach to counselling. He describes how an integrative approach borrows concepts and techniques from a variety of theoretical models and applies them to phases of the counselling process, whereas theoretical integration refers to a conceptual or theoretical creation beyond a mere blending of techniques (2005: 464). Three of the most common pathways to the goal of the integrative approach are listed in Corey (2005) as technical eclecticism, theoretical integration and the common factors approach. The common factors approach (Arkowitz, 1997 cited in Corey 2005) searches for common elements across different theoretical systems. The limitations of the integrative approach are described in Corey (2001). One such drawback mentioned is an,

... undisciplined eclectic approach being an excuse for failing to develop a sound rationale for systematically adhering to certain concepts and to the techniques that are extensions of them (2001: 6).

A large number of therapists are said to identify themselves as ‘eclectic’, a weak approach possibly displaying a lack of knowledge. Corey (2001) emphasises the need for a foundation approach, which is closest to the practitioner’s own worldview, in order to support effective integrative practice. The foundation approach is personal to each practitioner; therefore,

The art of integrative counselling implies that there are no prefabricated models that fit any practitioner perfectly. Instead, the challenge is to customize a counselling approach that is tailored for each practitioner (2001: 18).

While McMahon and Patton (2006), Niles et al. (2011) and Corey (2008) do provide literature which is extremely useful for guidance counsellors, the terminology surrounding the work they describe is career counselling, career development or counselling. None of the authors uses the phrase guidance counselling. This may be misleading for guidance counsellors. A place for guidance counselling theory aligned with practical literature must be found. Included in such literature would be both career
and counselling theory presented in an integrative, balanced and blended approach. In the next section the focus is on guidance counsellor education. The OECD (1996: 23) describe how teachers who take responsibility for educational and career guidance are often seen as somewhat marginal to the rest of the teaching profession and similarly career counsellors are not well integrated with the rest of the counselling profession. The extent to which theoretical approaches are represented within the guidance counsellor education programme is interesting to observe. As Corey (2008: 3) puts it, “Attempting to practice without an explicit theoretical rationale is like trying to build a house without a set of blueprints.”

3.6 Guidance Counsellor Education Programme Participants

McCarthy’s description of a current trend in guidance education states that,

Development of course content is very much a customer based model, i.e., training needs analysis undertaken with participants; much consultation before and during courses; continuous course review – participants treated as partners in learning (1999: 4).

As the context chapter showed, one of the reasons the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at UL may have developed was as a response to the need for more guidance counsellors in Ireland. Since its development, the programme has been in high demand. The participants of the programme are fundamental to its success, or otherwise, and a central question in this research study surrounds the input factors of a guidance counsellor education programme. Therefore it is necessary to review literature surrounding institutional requirements and the participants of a guidance counselling programme. This section of the literature review explores the past and current requirements and trends in relation to guidance counsellor education programmes and participants.

3.7 The Guidance Counsellor Education Programme: Training Traditions and Current Requirements

Cedefop (2009) explain how the diversity of situations within which career guidance practitioners work is accompanied by equal diversity in the form and manner of training provided in preparation for and delivery of their working role. Four traditions in the
initial education of a range of professional areas, including guidance counselling, are outlined as follows:

- The first is an ‘academic’ tradition, which aligns with seeking status for the profession by association with a university academic discipline.
- The second is a ‘social efficiency’ tradition, which is associated with technocratic rationally, identifying the specific duties and tasks of career guidance and building training programmes to ensure their performance at an acceptable level.
- The third is a ‘developmentalist’ tradition, which gives priority to the broad development of the career guidance practitioner.
- Finally, a ‘social reconstructionist’ tradition attends to the transformation of social situations rather than their reproduction. (2009: 22)

What is evident from observing these four traditions in relation to approaches to guidance counsellor education is the unsurprising convergence with the various theoretical orientations in the guidance counselling community. However, interestingly Cedefop (2009) note that these approaches are rarely distinct but are commonly blended in the design of professional education programmes for guidance counsellors.

The UL prospectus states that an objective of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling is “To qualify practicing teachers as guidance counsellors”. It stipulates that candidates must meet one of the following entry requirements:

- A degree in Education from a concurrent undergraduate programme.
- An appropriate Bachelor's Degree and Higher Diploma in Education.
- An approved equivalent professional teaching qualification.
- Graduates with an appropriate level of experience and a particular interest in this area.

Doyle (2001) describes how the UL programme is offered to not only qualified but experienced second level teachers. Some programmes restrict entrants, and John McCarthy (1999) describes the limitations of having such restrictions:

One of the limitations of the UCD training programme was that it confined entry to university graduates. Some teachers, e.g., Home Economics, Woodwork and Metalwork and others in the National Manpower Service and ANCO became disadvantaged as a result of this restriction and sought training in the UK during the 1970s (1999: 4).
The situation in the late 1960s and early 1970s that led to Irish residents travelling to the United Kingdom to receive guidance counselling education is described by the following extract.

At present, the only approved course in the Republic is a one year full-time programme at University College Dublin leading to a diploma in Careers Guidance. This course was offered for the first time in 1967, when 16 students were admitted. Since 1973 about 50 students have been admitted annually, though by no means all of those who complete the course remain in school guidance activity (O’Reilly, 1978: 13).

Doyle (2001) discusses the importance of the current outreach provision of the UL programme in providing an accessible route for those wishing to consider guidance counselling work. In the past enrolling in a guidance counselling education programme in the United Kingdom was the route chosen by many, as Ireland had only one approved course with limited entry. Examples of United Kingdom programmes included Universities in Reading, Lancaster, Swansea and Nottingham Trent.

3.8 The UK Guidance Counsellor Education Programme

Collins (1998) describes the guidance counselling education many Irish people received in the UK, including the influence Hamblin (director of the Swansea guidance counselling programme) had on the guidance service throughout Ireland following the education many Irish guidance counsellors received from him.

From 1974 to 1980 a number of Irish teachers studied, each summer, with Douglas Hamblin and with Leslie Button at Swansea University, where they learned about the British school approach to pastoral care/affective education (Collins 1998: 40).

An article by Watkins and McLoughlin (2005), ‘Celebrating the Contribution of Douglas Hamblin’, illustrates how, throughout the 1980s, Douglas directed summer schools in pastoral care at University College Swansea:

Hundreds of teachers would arrive from UK and beyond to a week of lectures and workshops, and leave with their own plans, curricula and materials for supporting the personal and academic development of the pupils they knew. (2005: 4)

Today, Hamblin’s influence on the approaches used in guidance counselling education programmes is still evident. One such example of this influence is that Hamblin’s work...
is incorporated in the content covered by participants in the UL guidance counsellor 
education programme. Hamblin’s ‘active model of school counselling’ (1974) is applied 
by guidance counsellors today. This model suggests four broad functions that the 
guidance counsellor must perform:

1. The counsellor as a resource person

2. The counsellor as a mobiliser of resources

3. The counsellor as a link between the school and other agencies

4. The counsellor as a link between school and home.

Hamblin believed that the secondary school is a “community essentially concerned with 
approaches to guidance which have been identified as contributing to the effectiveness 
of the whole school approach. She indicates that school systems should promote the 
involvement of subject teachers and head teachers in order to achieve a successful 
whole school approach to guidance. This insight can be applied to both the British and 
Irish current guidance and counselling contexts.

Universities in Reading and Lancaster were other UK institutions where Irish people 
would travel to participate in guidance and counselling programmes. It states in 
‘Counselling in Schools, A study of the present situation in England and Wales’ that at 
Reading University,

The framework and the philosophy of the course had been strongly influenced 
by the presence during much of 1965-6 of a visiting American; in this instance 
Professor G. Moore from Buffalo, U.S.A. (Schools Council, 1967: 5).

Subsequently the course at Lancaster was divided into four areas of study. They were 
foundation studies, studies relating to the growing child, studies relating to adult life, 
and the practice of guidance. The Lancaster course, however, was also restrictive in 
entry. Jones (1977), when recounting the development of guidance counsellor education 
programmes, states that,

In October 1965, courses for training school counsellors (who must be trained 
teachers with five years’ teaching experience) were set up at the Universities of 
Reading and Keele. Since then others have mushroomed throughout the country 
(Jones, 1977: 24).
The situation in the late 1960s and 1970s saw both teachers and others travelling to the UK for guidance counselling education as not enough places were available in Ireland. The need to introduce guidance and counselling education programmes in Ireland that could increase numbers and add more varied entrant requirements grew. During the 1970s the ‘Careers Guidance in Ireland’ report recommended that “Courses of training for guidance work should be open to suitable graduate and non-graduate personnel” (O’Reilly, 1978: 4). The results of a survey conducted in 1972 of the graduates from the UCD Guidance Counsellor Education programme showed that almost one in three were no longer actively engaged in guidance. This strengthened the argument for changing entry requirements and increasing entry numbers at a time when the demand for guidance counsellors was high.

McCarthy (1999) describes how in 1981 University College Cork established a Postgraduate Diploma course open to graduates (regardless of the type of higher education institute) and to non-graduates. McCarthy states that this significantly broadened the base of entrants to the profession, which included Gardaí, nurses, primary teachers and accountants, as well as post-primary teachers.

3.9 Do Teachers Make Good Guidance Counsellors?

In the early years of the guidance counselling profession the majority of school counsellors came from the teaching ranks. Sheil and Lewis (1993) state that guidance counsellors are “generally recruited from the ranks of serving second-level teachers and must have at least three years of teaching experience” (1993: 7). Baker and Gerler (2004) suggest school systems and counsellor educators preferred this recruitment system. Others suggest that teachers do not make good guidance counsellors. Whether or not teachers make the most suitable guidance counsellors is an issue that emerges quite frequently in literature. Hamblin (1974) suggests that teachers are ideal candidates for becoming guidance counsellors:

There is a clear link between counselling and teaching because interpersonal relationships are at the heart of both activities (1974: 18).

In a study of the perceptions of counsellor educators, Smith et al. (2001), cited in Baker and Gerler (2004), found that many more of today’s counsellor educators, as opposed to those 35 years ago, believe that teaching experience, although potentially helpful, is not
necessary for success in school counselling. Furthermore, it has also been suggested by Baker and Gerler (2004) that teachers do not make good guidance counsellors as they are increasingly interested in the product rather than the process of counselling. However, educational literature suggests teachers are more concerned with the process of teaching, but that due to top-down assessment demands the focus of their work is on academic outcomes. McDermott and Richardson (2005: 33) describe how the teacher is divided, caught between a public and a private articulation of the teaching self, within the organisation of school. Baker and Gerler (2004) present an aspect to this debate when they note,

Wrenn (1957) helps when he points out that counselling is different in emphasis from teaching because the subject of the learning experience is the learner himself. This is a key difference yet it provides a link between teaching and counselling. Learning and learning processes are at the heart of counselling (2004: 3).

As learning is recognised as being central to both the processes of teaching and guidance counselling it may be the case that a degree-level understanding of pedagogical processes is required. However, in the Department of Education’s Inspectorate Review of Guidance in Second-Level Schools (2006), the following comment from a post-primary student is recorded:

How can a person switch from being a teacher to being a guidance counsellor and back again? How can they be expected to work out their priorities and do all the bits of the different jobs properly? (2006: 105).

With students expressing concerns such as the above the discourse remains inconclusive. Teachers continually express an interest in participating in guidance counsellor education programmes and this research hopes to gain an understanding as to why this is the case. The next section explores continuing professional development in order to establish if teachers’ interest in participation in guidance counsellor education programmes relates to a specific continuing professional development need.

3.10 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Teachers
In order to understand why teachers choose to participate in guidance counsellor education programmes it is necessary to review the existing teacher development routes and the CPD available for teachers. Currently, possible options available to teachers
wishing to continue professional development are becoming year heads, pursuing courses in areas such as education leadership, whole school planning, mentoring, information communication technology (ICT) or guidance counselling, and becoming members of the support service for second-level schools. In Hargreaves and Goodson (1996), the study of the professional development of teachers is addressed in three dimensions of teachers’ professional lives, namely the “personal, professional, and political dimensions of teachers” (1996: 24). However, relatively little is known as to whether it is for personal, professional or political reasons that teachers choose to participate in guidance counselling education programmes.

Pauline Finucane (2004) discusses how CPD offers teachers many rewards in terms of their teaching and their learning; however, the true meaning of CPD and its holistic definition has been somewhat lost. Finucane states that,

> While it is encouraging to witness teachers’ commitment to their learning, the value of that learning should not be limited to their career progression, but should contribute to the quality of their teaching and the learning which they facilitate (2004: 164).

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) explain the need for internal motivation in a complex, post-modern age as “a self-directed search and struggle for continuous learning”, rather than “compliance with the enervating obligations of endless change demanded by others” (1996: 21).

External motivation also attracts teachers towards continuing professional development programmes. One of the findings that emerged from Finucane’s research is that there is a culture among teachers to use accredited CPD as a tool for advancement.

> Teachers reported that in some instances they identified a niche opportunity in their schools and intentionally sought accredited CPD to put themselves in the best position to fill that niche (2004: 166).

The opportunity for teachers to both study and practice guidance counselling has increased in recent times. Finucane identifies the increasing role counselling has within education.

> As a result of the development of a more inclusive approach to education since the 1990’s the areas of counselling and learning support have assumed a more central position within schools” (2004: 67).
On the one hand this could be perceived as teachers using CPD to satisfy their career
development needs so as to move out of the classroom into the extended roles of
teaching. On the other hand, teachers may be recognising that opportunities have arisen
in response to the social challenges within a school and they may feel the need to
respond to these challenges. Additionally, teachers may feel they are already providing
a certain amount of support to pupils in the classroom and they recognise that they have
a talent for guidance and counselling that they wish to pursue – “Good teachers have
always deployed the basic skills of the counsellors” (McGuiness, 1998: 65). The social
needs of pupils are changing and it is said that guidance counsellors with proper training
should be providing for such needs. The NCGE recommends the DES develop an action
plan for guidance in education. Included in this action plan should be an examination of
existing training programmes in the light of economic and social changes as they impact
on the educational system, and taking into consideration best practice in the European
Union and the USA (Recommendation 5, 1996: 15). Examining the existing programme
at UL following 12 years of operation highlights the extent to which the course is
responding to economic and social changes.

3.11 The Relationship between the Guidance Counsellor, Initial Training and
Role Change
Whether or not guidance counsellors themselves are responding to economic and social
changes is an area for discussion. Repetto et al. (2008: 182) cite Baker (1994) when
describing how the role of guidance practitioners “is defined according to the tasks they
carry out”, and as these “tasks change over time” counsellors must be “prepared to
exercise many different professional roles”. Today, guidance counsellors work in an
environment that has accumulated a vast number of perspectives on guidance counsellor
competency, career development and counselling theories. The NCGE (2004: 12)
outline the specific roles of the guidance counsellor in detail as including guidance
activities that assist students to make choices:

Counselling - helping students to explore their thoughts and feelings, and the
choices open to them; giving care and support to students learning to cope with
the many aspects of growing up.
Assessment - helping students to obtain a better self-understanding through the
use of psychometric tests and other inventories.
Information - providing students with objective and factual data on education and training opportunities, occupations, labour market information, entitlements, etc.

Advice - making suggestions based on the advisor’s own knowledge and experience.

Educational Development Programmes - facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills relating to studying, examination performance, choices of subjects and levels.

Personal and Social Development Programmes - facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills relating to a student’s personal and social development, self-awareness, decision-making and planning.

Referral - this includes two types of activity:
   i) referral of an individual student by the guidance counsellor to other professionals outside of the school, e.g. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS);
   ii) referral of an individual student to the guidance counsellor by teachers, Board of Management, school management, and parents. The voluntary participation in counselling of the referred student must be respected by all concerned.

Furthermore, guidance activities that assist students to make transitions include:

   Careers education/career transition programmes - enabling students to make transitions to further and higher education, training and employment.

   Placement - work experience, work shadowing, and preparing students for employment.

   Follow-up - following up former students regarding progression routes and destinations.

Finally, guidance activities that support the achievement of the aims of the school guidance programme are listed as:

   Consultation with parents, school staff and students.

   Feedback - giving feedback to the Board of Management, school management and staff on the needs of individual students, groups and the school as an organisation and how the school guidance programme has supported students’ choices and transitions.

   Networking - establishing links with employers, relevant agencies and institutions to enhance guidance work with students.

   Promoting change - assisting curriculum development in the school.

   Managing, organising and co-ordinating guidance activities into a coherent programme.

The NCGE (2004: 13) indicate that the nature and range of guidance activities they outline are based on the premise that guidance is both a whole school concern and a
specialist area within education. The IGC (2008) have documented recent changes in terms of whole school guidance and counselling service, curriculum and roles and responsibilities.

The Institute places a strong emphasis on the distinction which exists between the curricular elements of second-level guidance and the professional guidance service which is provided by the guidance counsellor, and argues that with proper resources a truly effective guidance service could be established in Ireland (2008: 3).

Repetto (2008) describes how, based on increasing globalisation, societal changes and technological changes, there is a need to improve the initial and continuous education of guidance counsellors. She stresses the point that there is little agreement on the type of training counsellors must receive in order to provide these services. However as the OECD (1996) report puts it,

The apparently disparate nature of the content of guidance programmes in educational institutions need not be a problem. Country experiences show that well-planned courses focusing on personal growth can comfortably include individual personal and social development, understanding of the world of work and the local community, work experience and even job placement (1996: 51).

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in Ireland looked specifically at guidance provision in second level schools. This study documented how “schools varied widely in the nature of the guidance counsellor’s role” (McCoy et al. 2006: 91). It also observed variation in the range of guidance counsellor activities and the balance of time spent on the areas of career guidance, educational support and personal support. When literature is examined closely to determine an explanation for this variation it is found that,

The priorities that guidance workers attach to their work tasks appear more a function of the particular type of training they have undertaken. They may not necessarily be a function of clients’ needs (McCarthy, 2001: 7).

This research will explore if programmes such as the UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling influence the nature of guidance counselling graduates’ practice. Further exploration will take place to determine if the subject content, and methods used to teach the content, influence guidance counsellors, not only during their
participation in the programme but throughout their career, and consequently the people they deal with.

### 3.12 Competency Frameworks for Guidance Counsellors

Competency frameworks have been suggested as an appropriate model for the development of guidance counsellor education programmes. Hiebert (2008) describes an international competency framework that includes the core competencies of client advocacy, awareness of client cultural differences, designing, implementing and evaluating guidance and counselling programmes. Further competencies include those in relatively new specialised areas such as assessment, information management, consultation and co-ordination, community capacity building, and programme and service management. The translation of the latest international competency framework is the challenge for course leaders and parties involved in devising programmes, especially when the roles of the graduates of guidance and counselling programmes are already so diverse. For example, the IGC (2008: 5) list guidance counsellors’ roles as being made up of the three separate yet interlinked areas of educational, vocational/career and personal/social guidance. Similarly the NCGE (1996) describe the three areas as,

- Personal Counselling: Personal and social skills.
- Educational Counselling: Choices, subjects, courses, levels.
- Career Counselling: Choices, vocational education and training.

The complexity of implementing and integrating these roles is well documented by both the IGC and NCGE. However, it is also necessary for international frameworks to be considered, as they are described “as the basis for creating a tailor-made set of qualifications” (Repetto, 2008:184).

Using a common framework across countries will promote a common way of viewing career-life development and a common way of describing the types of competencies needed to deliver quality educational and vocational guidance services (2008: 184).

Repetto (2008) notes that a competency framework can be used as a first step in developing training modules to address the training needs of guidance counsellors. The
challenge is that with variation recognised between guidance counselling education programmes, how will international competencies be translated into the individual guidance counsellor education programmes?

Upon examining the international competencies it is obvious that the scope of training programmes will need to expand dramatically in order to give practitioners the competencies they need to provide quality services in a global society (Repetto, 2008: 178).

In order to examine the relationship between international competencies and the focus of education programmes, the specific context of Ireland and the UL programme is considered. The Irish guidance counselling service is among a minority of European country services in placing an emphasis on personal counselling. The breakdown of guidance areas covered in a number of European countries is analysed in the ESRI report ‘Guidance for All?’. This shows that the emphasis in Europe is on the vocational and educational guidance of students. Ireland, however, is one of the few countries that provides personal guidance. In setting the context for the research it was recognised that the strength of the personal dimension in guidance counselling in Ireland may be due to educational and societal values, and international influences such as Rogerian theory. The NGF report states that, “The personal qualities of guidance counsellors are considered one of the main strengths of the guidance services in post-primary schools” (2007: 35). These personal qualities are characterised as approachable, flexible, committed and hardworking. Hamblin (1974) states that,

Certain personality qualities are essential for counsellors. In themselves, these qualities are insufficient, but training will refine them and bring them under the disciplined control of the counsellor (1974: 19).

In practice the IGC (2002: 17) list three codes of conduct in relation to competence:

1. Guidance counsellors maintain and develop their professional competence.
2. Guidance counsellors recognise the limits of their training and experience and take care not to exceed them. Where they do not feel competent, they make appropriate referral to others within or outside the profession.
3. Guidance counsellors ensure that they accurately represent their education, training and affiliation with the institute.

A strong ethical commitment to competencies can be observed from this IGC document. Hamblin lists the qualities that Carl Rogers describes as essential for a guidance
counsellor. These are ‘accurate empathy’, ‘spontaneity and genuineness’ and a ‘capacity for non-possessive warmth’. It is argued that it is impossible to separate so distinctly career and personal guidance. Porfeli et al. (2005) describe many theories of career development and note how it is both the person and the context, as well as the process and content orientations collectively, that provide the most complete picture of career development. The education programmes that guidance counsellors attend potentially play a significant role in the type (career, personal, educational) of guidance service offered in Irish schools. The UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling reflects the literature that suggests Ireland places a strong emphasis on developing practitioner competencies in relation to the personal dimension of guidance and counselling.

3.13 The Focus of Guidance Counselling Education Programmes

Guidance counselling education programmes differ from course to course, for example by having different modules or giving a different weight of time to specific areas. Three elements of guidance counselling in secondary and adult education services can be observed: personal, career/vocational and educational. The extent to which each element is received varies depending on what the person needs or wants and on the guidance counsellor they are working with. The type of education the guidance counsellor has received may influence the service they provide. Earlier in this literature review it was recognised how different programmes encompass different theoretical views. In the Swansea programme the work of Douglas Hamblin was said to be influential. In Reading University the work of Professor G. Moore influenced the philosophy and content of the course.

Programmes such as the UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling potentially have a significant effect on the nature of guidance counselling people receive. The initial education guidance counsellors receive is potentially linked to their function as guidance counsellors.

McCarthy describes how there is wide variation across countries in who decides the content and methodology of initial training for guidance workers (2001: 11). In some cases, for example in Australia, China, Finland, Slovenia, Spain, and The Netherlands and, it is the educators alone who decide on the content and methodology of the
programme. In France it is determined by the government alone. In Austria, Czech Republic, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal and Romania the educators and the government ministry decide on the course content together. In Italy the educators and local authorities decide on course content. In Belgium, Denmark, Germany and the UK the educators, professional association and the government ministry together decide on the course content and methodology of initial education for guidance workers. In Ireland, McCarthy (2001) indicates how the course directors, the professional association (Institute of Guidance Counsellors) and the government ministry influence the course content. The influence of the course directors is noted by the NCGE when they describe how a committee of Directors and Representatives of the Initial Training Programmes in Guidance meets four times a year and its terms of reference include examining existing provision of initial and in-service training for guidance counsellors.

Arising out of this consultative process, the guidance course directors have reached agreement on a course recognition framework for the initial training of guidance counsellors. This recognition framework enables the Department of Education and Science and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors to ensure that guidance counsellors employed in education settings are appropriately qualified and have the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to work with young people and adults (NCGE, undated).

European surveys indicate that an extreme variety exists in relation to career guidance and counselling provisions, the roles and tasks performed within the services, and the training and qualification of guidance and counselling staff, according to a memorandum on ‘Guidance and Counselling in Lifelong Learning’ (Van Esbroeck, 2000: 1). This memorandum describes how the diversity between and within countries is of such magnitude that it is very difficult to set general guidelines in relation to required qualifications and training. However, it does make suggestions to overcome this difficulty, which include:

That the training of counsellors will require:

- A thorough analysis of the existing situation within the EU of the career guidance and counselling provision, the roles and tasks performed within the services and the training and qualification of staff.
- The development of European standards for career counsellors.
- The creation of a new postgraduate European Masters degree as one of the EU priorities.
- The development of continuing professional development programmes based upon European standards.
The educational and training programmes should:

- Adopt a modular structure (ECTS).
- Use a client-centred holistic guidance approach as a heuristic framework.
- Cover comparisons of educational and labour markets within the EU.
- Include topics like information technology, inter-cultural communication skills, management skills, etc.
- Prepare for diversity.
- Prepare for flexibility.
- Include stages, internships and other learning experiences at a transnational level (2000: 3).

While Van Esbroeck suggests that these proposals should be applied across the guidance and counselling education community, he also recognises the need for variation:

All educational and training programmes need to be grounded by day-to-day practice, and linked to national accreditation and registration structures. This may, due to the diversity in the European career guidance scene, require flexibility in admission and remedial training (2000: 3).

The variety of programmes across Europe are all said to be devised with either a top-down or a bottom-up approach. Sultana (2009) describes how both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses.

A key consideration here is which strategy is best suited to ensure sensitivity towards changing roles in a rapidly changing environment. If frameworks are built around the competences excellent practitioners have demonstrated in the past, they may fail to identify evolving competence requirements unless they are up-dated regularly (2009: 23).

When looking further at curriculum development in education, the concept of backward mapping is important to consider in this context. Backward mapping (Elmore, 1994) essentially assumes that the closer one is to the source of the problem the greater one’s ability to influence it. Guidance counsellor education programmes provide graduates with the training required to address clients’ needs/problems.

The problem-solving ability of complex systems depends not on hierarchical control but on maximising discretion at the point where the problem is most immediate (1994: 247).
Taking account of the context of the guidance counselling community and the wider educational discourse surrounding curriculum development, the bottom-up approach in guidance counselling is suggested as the more appropriate for addressing client’s needs.

3.14 The Focus of the University of Limerick Guidance and Counselling Programme

The UL guidance and counselling programme is influenced by the requirements set down by the IGC and by the course director. The UL programme outline states,

The design of the course and the selection of syllabus content were strongly influenced by the guidelines which were issued by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.

The guidelines indicate the content components and the time that must be spent on each sub-component. The three main components are outlined in Table 3.1 as knowledge, skills and practical.

Table 3.1: The Institute of Guidance Counsellors Programme Requirements

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<td>Role and functions of the guidance counsellor</td>
<td>Guidance skills development 24 hours</td>
<td>Guidance practice and supervision 24 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career development and the nature of work</td>
<td>Counselling skills development 24 hours</td>
<td>Counselling practice and supervision 24 hours</td>
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<td>24 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>The psychology of human development and behaviour</td>
<td>Experiential group work 24 hours</td>
<td>Appropriate placements 48 hours</td>
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<td>24 hrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counselling theory 24 hours</td>
<td>Psychometric testing 30 hrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional issues (e.g. ethics, record keeping)</td>
<td>Information management and systems 12 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism, special educational needs and equality issues 6 hours</td>
<td>Personal growth/development, which should include personal counselling 12 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidance programme planning/Whole school planning 6 hrs</td>
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These components are reflected in the University of Limerick programme as it incorporates modules in:

- Counselling Theory and Practice
- The Psychology of Human Development
- Theory and Skills of Experiential Group Processes
- Theory of Career Development and Behaviour
- Research Methods and Information Technology
- Theory and Practice of Psychological Assessment
- Educational Issues and Professional Practice in Guidance Counselling
- School Placement
- The Psychology of Work and Working Life
- Project
- Industrial Placement and Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education

Similarity can be seen between the Institute of Guidance Counsellors’ requirements for content and the UL programme modules, but a further influence is also evident. The UL programme outline states that,

The overall thrust of the course reflects these requirements and the importance of the counselling dimension of guidance counselling is accorded primacy within the course (UL, 2008).

Therefore it can be said that the UL programme reflects both the professional association input and possibly the course director. Perspectives from course directors will be outlined in the findings chapter. The personal counselling domain is said to be the philosophy driving the UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling. It will be established later in this research study if the emphasis placed on the counselling or psychological elements of the UL course content is due to the course director, professional body requirements or government influences. In the context chapter the response to needs was highlighted as a significant reason for developments in guidance counselling. It must be noted that an important document by Liam Ryan was released in the years prior to the UL programme’s development. This document was a national survey of adolescents in Ireland in 1992 and it was published by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in 1993. It clearly outlines the pressing mental health needs in society at the time. The document could possibly have influenced the counselling focus of the UL programme indirectly.
3.15 The Psychological or Socio-Economic Underpinnings of a Guidance and Counselling Education Programme

From gaining an understanding of theoretical orientation at the beginning of this chapter, and from reviewing literature surrounding UL’s programme, it may be provisionally noted that the UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling is a course with psychological emphasis. The importance of a psychological emphasis to guidance counsellor education programmes is described by McCarthy. He also expresses concern about the quality of education guidance counsellors receive, stating that there is “concern at the quality of training, especially in the counselling skills area.” (1999: 4).

With the UL programme focusing on the psychological aspects of guidance counselling the standard of personal counselling people receive from graduates of the programme should reflect this focus. Alternatively it could be maintained that a weakness of the UL programme may be its lack of focus on the socio-economic dimension. Watts (1996) describes the most common view held by governments on this debate:

The main broad aims which governments tend to seek through guidance provision are two-fold. The first is economic efficiency in the allocation and use of human resources. The second aim is social equity in access to educational and vocational opportunities (1996: 380).

Considering these aims, the socio-economic focus is clearly held in higher esteem than the psychological focus. The focus of a guidance counselling education programme can be observed in the type of theory that is taught on the programme. As deducted from the earlier literature review on theoretical orientation psychology, sociology and economics are all connected with guidance counselling practice but literature surrounding the extent to which each underpins a guidance counselling education programme is relatively limited. This research will add to the body of knowledge surrounding the psychology/socio-economic debate.

3.16 Insights into Another European Guidance Counselling Community

In line with the objectives set out for this research, insights into university guidance counselling education programmes have been gained to add a European dimension to the research. The University in Finland offers a Masters programme in guidance which has been compared with the UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling. It is first necessary to review the background of guidance counselling in Finland. In a journal
article entitled ‘Guidance counselling in various societies: A comparative approach’, the
author describes how important it is to consider cultural and social backgrounds of
countries when undertaking comparative research:

The international exchange of experience, research results, concepts, etc. in the
area of guidance and counselling will only be successful if the various cultural
and societal contexts in which these practices are instituted are taken into
consideration (Lothar, 1993: 47).

While it is not the intention to conduct a full comparison in this study, it is important
that the international dimension of education programmes in guidance counselling is
briefly recognised and understood in order to provide additional elements to new
learnings. Educational programmes for guidance counsellors exist across the globe but
for this study Finland is selected. The rationale for this selection was described in
section 1.3.

3.17 Finland’s Social, Cultural and Economic Background
Finland, similarly to Ireland, is considered an economically developed country with
variations in cultural and social issues evident. Lairio and Nissila (2002) describe
typical features of contemporary Finnish society as,

The challenges associated with globalisation, such as internationalisation,
increasing multiculturalism, individualisation, an abundance of opportunities,
competition and uncertainty (2002: 159).

These typical features are also evident in Ireland but it is the deeper social and cultural
issues in both countries where variation occurs. In Ireland issues with drugs trading,
gangland crime and unemployment are topical in national papers. That is not to say
further problems are not immersed in Irish society but are rather less publicised. In
Finland high suicide rates and the breakdown of family structures are examples of social
problems. An article in The Irish Times following a school massacre in Finland
identifies the legality of guns as having a huge effect on Finnish society. Statistics
presented in this article that compare the Finnish and Irish cultures include,

Recent World Health Organisation statistics show the number of people who
die every year as a result of intentional violence in Finland is 2.19 per 100,000,
which is double the rate in Sweden (1.02) and almost triple the Irish figure
(0.76).
European Commission statistics published in 2006 also show 29.4 people per 100,000 take their own lives in Finland every year, double the Irish suicide rate, which stands at 14.1 people per 100,000 (The Irish Times, 2008).

Rimpela, from the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health in Finland, cited in The Irish Times article, described how family structures have broken down, with parents often having to relocate to find work. “This means we don’t have the same family structures as in Ireland and so our welfare system has to be strong”. Rimpela also describes how Finnish boys and men generally do not communicate or share feelings effectively. The breakdown in family structures is continuously referred to throughout the article and it is suggested that the internet may be replacing the extended family. In a study of Finnish school counselling Lairio and Nissila (2002: 20) state that relative to its population, “Finland had the highest number of households connected to the internet in the world”.

Erik Haggman, a senior advisor at the state provincial social welfare office, states,

Our big problem is how to touch the ‘group zeros’ or ‘walking bombs’ – the young people aren’t being reached by counselling services, especially boys. Girls tend to be more social (The Irish Times, 2008).

The article from The Irish Times provided an insight into specific cultural and social problems in Finland and highlighted that counselling services play a part in addressing such problems.

Studies on Finnish guidance counsellors have similar results to the literature on Irish guidance counsellors with regard to the number of competencies they are expected to display.

The findings of the evaluation study suggest that the study counsellors are strongly committed to their work. In all school types, the study counsellors’ work consisted of a great number of tasks, many of them without any link with the core areas of educational guidance and counselling or, in the first place, with educational guidance and counselling as such, such as substituting for teachers, supervisory duties, or preparing the school schedule (Numminen and Kasurinen, 2003: 27).

It is important to determine whether helping with conducting whole school duties represents a commitment to the school or the guidance and counselling service provided in the school. Similarly in Ireland it has been noted that “in almost a third of schools the ex-quota hours for guidance are not allocated to guidance” (DES: 2009: 8). This study
will compare findings with insights from the study on graduates from the University in Finland, in order to determine international comparisons or contrasts.

3.18 The Professional Practice of Guidance Counselling
The later stage of the literature review focuses on the professional practice of the guidance counsellor alongside the understandings gained thus far from the theoretical elements of the literature review. This section is a critical reflection on the professional practice of the guidance counsellor in an educational context. The educational issues that envelop the role of the guidance counsellor will be explored. The extent to which guidance counselling is a professional role will be determined by illuminating the complexities surrounding it. The shape of this section of the literature review evolves by firstly looking at the professional status of the guidance counsellor, followed by a critical reflection on the role of the guidance counsellor within the guidance service. The connection between historical narrative and the professional identity of the guidance counsellor has been established in the context chapter. The discourse surrounding the complexity of integrating the three dimensions of the guidance counselling role (educational, vocational/career, personal/social) in Ireland will be presented. Finally, this section concludes by positioning the role of the guidance counsellor in terms of professionalism and professionalisation. Professionalism is the focus on what qualifications, acquired capacities and competence are required for the successful exercise of an occupation, whereas professionalisation is a measure of the societal strength and authority of an occupational group (Englund, 1996 cited in Sexton, 2007).

3.19 The Professional Status of Guidance Counsellors
Having determined that there is a great deal of ambiguity about the term ‘guidance counsellor’ I now wish to examine whether it meets the requirements of a profession. Watts and Van Esbroeck (2000) attempted a similar task but in the context of guidance and counselling in higher education in Europe. They posed the following questions:

To what extent is guidance and counselling in higher education a profession? Is it a profession in its own right? Or simply one particular site for a more broadly-based guidance and counselling profession? Or a common site for a series of separate professions? (Watts and Van Esbroeck, 2000: 181).
Watts and Van Esbroeck (2000) determined that emerging forms of professional formation are visible in many countries among three groups in particular: careers advisers, counsellors, and psychotherapists. However, the relative pace of development across the three groups, the framing of the boundaries between them, and the strength of cross-sectoral identity within each of the groups, vary considerably both within and across European countries. Sultana (2004) describes the guidance counselling community as a ‘truncated profession’. The relationship between professional identity and the initial education of guidance counsellors is indicated by the OECD (1996).

The fact that effective training for career counsellors is so variable in most OECD countries and that guidance takes place in so many different settings, results in a weak professional identity (1996: 23).

Bimrose (2006), when discussing the topic of forming an occupational identity, illustrates the British context when she states that,

The broad community of career guidance has always been somewhat fragmented and as a consequence, there has been an absence of any unifying professional identity (Bimrose, 2006: 2).

In an effort to determine whether or not guidance counselling can be categorised as a profession in the Irish context we need first to comprehend the term ‘profession’. What exactly is a profession? Breathnach (2000) contends that whether or not an occupation is regarded as a profession depends on how it is perceived by both the public and practitioners, and the manner in which the practitioner undertakes the work. Public perception of what constitutes a profession varies greatly, as does the personal and professional conduct of a guidance counsellor. Due to the lack of conformity in relation to the term ‘profession’ a variety of characteristics of a profession have been formulated. Breathnach (2000) identifies various characteristics pertaining to a ‘profession’ as opposed to an occupation. These include credentials and control of entry, a considerable degree of self-regulation, public esteem, and practitioner autonomy.

Considering Breathnach (2000), the following analysis of the guidance counselling profession can be deduced. The introduction of an all-graduate requirement in order to be a guidance counsellor in secondary education ensures professionalism and professional congruity. This is an advancement in the status of guidance counselling and certainly aids the promotion of guidance counselling as a profession. Sultana (2004)
Chapter Three – Literature Review

describes how integral to the development of a distinctive identity for the career guidance profession is the need to pay attention to “the extent and nature of professional training required prior to entry” (2004: 74). As indicated earlier in the literature review, McCarthy (2001: 7) states that “training has a dominant effect in establishing a professional identity”. Therefore, not only is it important for the profession to be all-graduate, it is also important that the training guidance counsellors receive plays a role in professional identity. Bimrose (2006) states that,

A key challenge for the career guidance community and policy makers is to support practitioners in the formation of clear occupational identities, through robust training systems, so that they can navigate the changes in their own industrial sector and help others navigate theirs. The cost of failing to do so has far-reaching consequences, not just for the careers profession but for society as a whole (Bimrose, 2006: 7).

Self-regulation is also identified as common practice employed by members of any given profession. Essential to the idea of a profession regulating itself is that practitioners must be members of the appropriate professional body in order to be permitted to practice (Breathnach, 2000). Guidance counsellors are not required to commit to any union but many are members of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, which is described as,

The professional body representing over 1200 practitioners in second level schools, third level colleges, adult guidance services, private practice and in other settings (IGC, undated).

The establishment of the IGC in 1968 brought into sharper focus the professional status of guidance counselling. Areas the IGC has most definitely addressed are outlining the role of the guidance counsellor (1984) and the professional codes of ethics and practice (2007). Every profession requires professional conduct. These professional codes of practice highlight the importance of adopting and maintaining professional standards. The criteria outlined by the codes include areas such as competence, conduct, confidentiality, consent, testing, and evaluation and research. However, there are also noticeable gaps and transparencies, and at times subjective terminology is used in the Code of Ethics document. Many of the codes use the phrase ‘take all reasonable steps’ (codes 4.6, 4.8, 5.1 and 6.4). This phrase needs further clarification in relation to each code it is associated with, as it is open to interpretation. In 2009 the IGC released an
updated version of the codes and while improvements have been made, the phrase ‘take all reasonable steps’ is still evident in the document.

Bimrose (2006) discusses how membership of one of the various professional associations illustrates the way in which practitioners demonstrate their occupational identity in the British context. In the Irish context the IGC is by far the main professional association and Sultana (2004) notes how having one strong national professional organisation can be more beneficial to the guidance counselling profession than having numerous professional bodies.

So far the first two of Breathnach’s (2000) professional credentials – control of entry and self-regulation – are met by the guidance counselling community. The two remaining credentials are less easily identified. Following a critical reflection of the provision of a guidance counselling service and the complexities of the three-dimensional model of guidance counselling, the professional credentials of public esteem and practitioner autonomy may be identifiable.

3.20 The Provision of a Guidance Counselling Service

The context chapter for this research study described how the state of guidance counselling in Ireland before 1983 was, for a brief period, well supported and represented through associations such as The Institute of Vocational Guidance and Counselling of Ireland and The Association of Guidance Teachers; guidance topics were popular among the media and guidance provision compared well to international standards, suggesting that public esteem was high. However, with provision decreasing from 1:250 to today’s current ratio of 1:500 (with the exception of DEIS schools) provision is unsatisfactory, and with the current economic climate it will be essential for the professional nature of guidance counsellors to rise to the current challenges surrounding provision. Recent research on provision of a guidance service was undertaken by the DES Inspectorate (2009), which reported that,

Greater collaboration was required between guidance counsellors and SPHE and RE for planning and delivering the Junior Cycle. Most principals place high value on the guidance service. Some progress has been made in guidance planning but more is needed. The majority of schools had collaboration with other members of the school team (DES Inspectorate Report, 2009: 11).
With collaboration recognised as the key requirement going forward, guidance counsellors could view it as another challenge to add to the complexity of the guidance counselling role and the provision of a lifelong guidance service; or the benefits of collaboration could greatly outweigh the challenges. For example, the DES Inspectorate’s (2009) suggestion in relation to the guidance counsellor collaborating with the planning and delivery of SPHE and RE has many benefits for pupils.

The effectiveness of any SPHE programme is dependant on whole school support which incorporates the principles of equity, respect, tolerance and reward for effort which must permeate the whole school climate (SPHE Journal, 2006: 2).

These principles closely align with the work of the guidance counsellor. In addition, SPHE topics such as life choices are covered so that pupils are informed when making decisions. The cross-curricular values modelled by the whole school in relation to life choices can potentially reinforce learning for pupils, influence the value of the SPHE subject and support the whole guidance service.

### 3.21 The Three-Dimensional Model of Guidance Counselling and its Complexities

As indicated in the previous section guidance counselling in the Irish context is described by the IGC as being made up of three separate yet interlinked areas of personal and social, educational, and vocational guidance counselling. The DES Inspectorate report (2009) noted that “the provision of personal and social, educational and career guidance was well-balanced in the majority of schools” (2009: 46). While the provision of the three areas is documented as well-balanced, the balance in relation to roles within the model is problematic in that the role of the guidance counsellor is sometimes misconceived as the whole guidance service. The NCCA (2007) describes a curricular framework that is extensive and clearly places the primary responsibility of the guidance service on the shoulders of the guidance counsellor:

Guidance counsellors have primary responsibility for the delivery of the school’s guidance and counselling programmes (NCCA, 2007: 3).

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors is critical of this model and suggests that,
There is a need to recognise the limitations of this model when applied to service interventions that are additional to and different from 'curricular experiences' (2007: 8).

They also suggest,

It is imperative that we differentiate between the guidance counsellors’ sole responsibility, which is in the professional area of the guidance and counselling service, and their shared responsibility with other members of staff in delivering the curricular elements of the guidance programme (2007: 7).

Ryan (1993) reported that the role of the guidance counsellor in Ireland has always been broad and demanding, with their time being divided between providing career guidance, personal counselling, classroom teaching and other official activities. Indeed, one of the respondents to Ryan’s research described himself as “an overworked, underfunded and unappreciated information processor” (1993: 65). It is essential that guidance counsellors collaborate with the whole guidance service team in order to set clear role boundaries so that the complexity of the integrated model of guidance counselling is balanced and effective.

The last professional criterion listed by Breathnach (2000) is practitioner autonomy. Guidance counsellors are in a position to balance the complexities of the whole guidance service with the correct collaboration and support from the whole guidance team. The place of the three-dimensional model of guidance counselling in Irish policy documents (IGC, 2008; NCCA, 2007; NCGE, 2004) strengthens the autonomy of the guidance counsellor. Rather than viewing the model as extensive, the profession should welcome the value of the model in terms of its broadness. The Irish guidance counsellor is in an autonomous position in comparison to sub-specialist professions as they can provide for a variety of client needs. In the Irish educational context we have adopted an integrated service that strengthens the profession; as Sultana (2004) indicates, “problems can arise when career guidance is delivered as a sub-specialism within another main work role” (2004: 44). The notion of the unity of career and personal counselling has been repeatedly reinforced. Rak and O’Dell (1994) have demonstrated how career and ‘traditional’ counselling approaches are blended in good vocational interventions. It is important that the Irish guidance counselling community practice autonomy and protect the integrated model of guidance counselling.
Drudy (2009) concludes an insightful chapter on ‘Education and the Knowledge Economy: a Challenge for Ireland in Changing Times’ by stating that,

From an educational policy perspective, it will be extremely important to protect budgetary allocation for education to the maximum extent possible as the country struggles with recession (Drudy, 2009: 50).

Guidance counsellors must recognise the effects of the recession, not just in terms of career prospects but in line with the three dimensions of guidance counselling. For example, by identifying the need for sustained measures to address educational inequalities in order to enhance social cohesion (Drudy, 2009), guidance counsellors can accommodate this need and provide for the personal and social needs of clients. Supporting the practice of post-modern theoretical orientations such as the Distributive Model of Social Justice (Irving, 2005) will challenge guidance counsellors in relation to breaking down established norms such as gender stereotypes in relation to career choice. This is where I feel having a three-dimensional model is the strength of the Irish guidance counselling profession, as they can provide well-rounded support to people.

A key aim of education is not just to produce academically processed pupils but autonomous people capable of contributing to their societies and leading fulfilled lives in ways that go well beyond that facilitated by basic skills and academic knowledge (Lang, 1998: 3).

Aligned with this key aim of education that is focused on holistic development is the utilisation of the three-dimensional model of guidance counselling. If the strength of the model of guidance counselling is continually utilised then not only will the high status of the Irish guidance counselling profession be defined but the Irish community could potentially model good practice for the International guidance counselling community.

3.22 Professional Role

Having established a clear understanding of the term ‘guidance counselling’ it is now determined that yes, in fact, the guidance counsellor is a professional role in terms of control of entry and self-regulation. However, the criteria in relation to public esteem and practitioner autonomy are changeable variables and this literature review recognises that a greater sense of identity in terms of each individual guidance counsellor and a greater sense of professionalism would in turn lead to increased professionalisation of the role with potential benefits such as collaboration, provision and training.
From analysing the professional stance of guidance counsellors using Breathnach’s (2000) theoretical framework for identifying professionals, it emerged that the central concerns surrounding the guidance counselling profession related to pragmatic and practice-based professionalism rather than wider professionalisation, educational, philosophical or theoretical concerns. One must acknowledge the underlying positive from this observation, as it is widely noted (Sexton, 2007) that the professionalisation agenda can only be properly enhanced through the promotion of improved professionalism. However, it may also be the case that guidance counsellors need to be more willing to engage with the ‘bigger picture issues’ – the moral, political, social and philosophical issues that shape the wider educational agenda (Sexton, 2007) – if they are to achieve the enhanced professional status they appear to aspire to and require in order to validate their roles in a changing economic climate. An awareness of the need for guidance counsellors to evaluate their work in order to maintain professional status is necessary. Hearne (2010) cites Sampson et al. (2004) in order to highlight that “progress has been slow in the development of accountability or evaluation models in career guidance overall”. The Canadian Research Working Group (CRWG) on evidence-based practice in career development stressed the need for guidance counsellors to evaluate their work and to demonstrate the need for what they do. In Canada, policy makers challenged guidance counsellors by stating, “You haven’t made the case for the impact and value for career development services” (Borgen et al., 2009). It is important that Irish guidance counsellors provide the evidence required in order to validate their roles and the three-dimensional model of guidance counselling. It is also essential that the IGC and the NCGE represent the guidance counsellor by playing their part in advancing the professionalisation process. Once the professional status of the Irish guidance counsellor is cemented in literature, international policy makers must recognise the strength of the three-dimensional model of guidance counselling in reaching the current needs of the international community.

3.23 Conclusion
In this chapter, the complexity regarding the various understandings of guidance counselling has been presented along with a review of literature surrounding the reasons why graduates choose to participate in a guidance counselling education programme.
such as the UL programme. The focus of the guidance counsellor education programme has been reviewed. The theoretical orientations that guidance counsellors are expected to apply in practice have been provided. Furthermore, the Finnish guidance counselling context has been introduced for comparison. Reflecting on the literature outlined in this chapter, areas of inquiry relevant to this study have become apparent.

Defining the term ‘guidance counselling’ has been somewhat of a problematic professional crux in the past. A contemporary understanding of the term must include the three dimensions as outlined by the IGC (educational, vocational/career, personal/social), support a lifelong learning approach, be culturally inclusive, recognise the whole guidance counselling service and, most importantly, place the client/student at the centre of the process. Acknowledging my own ‘worldview’ or ‘value system’, an understanding of guidance counselling that reflects a societal stance rather than focusing on economic gain is better placed. The NGF (2007) offers this understanding.

Complex overarching bodies of knowledge have been outlined. A link between theoretical orientations and wider societal, economic and education values was identified. More recently, convergence between career and counselling theoretical literature was highlighted; however, guidance counselling is yet to establish itself as a separate body of knowledge. This theoretical gap may lead to a professional identity issue.

When reflecting on literature two important theoretical dimensions stand out. Firstly, the discourse surrounding the importance of personal counselling affirms its position within guidance counsellor education programmes (Johns; 2003; Mearns, 1998); and secondly, Corey’s description of the limitations of integrative counselling, and in particular the problems with eclectic models of counselling leading to surface knowledge rather than depth of knowledge. Guidance counsellor education programmes must adhere to requirements in relation to the focus of their content; however, the issues with providing ‘a little bit of everything’ must be highlighted. Corey indicates that a guidance counsellor must have a theoretical foundation approach that is close to a practitioner’s own ‘worldview’. Considering this comment and adhering to national and international competency frameworks is a significant challenge for guidance counsellor education programmes.
The literature recognised the guidance counsellor’s ‘worldview’ and ‘personal attributes’ as central to the guidance counselling process. An area of interest to this study is why people choose guidance counsellor education. Outlining literature on continuing professional development for teachers indicates that it may be due to personal, political or professional reasons.

Arguments for and against teachers becoming guidance counsellors exist. This study will observe the expressed opinions of graduates from the UL GDGC in order to add to the discourse surrounding the topic.

Establishing a clear understanding of the term ‘guidance counselling’, and having determined the professional role of the guidance counsellor, this literature review recognises that a greater sense of identity in terms of each individual guidance counsellor would in turn lead to a greater sense of professionalism.

International insights indicate a broad similarity between Irish and Finnish guidance counsellors in terms of the non-guidance-related roles they are providing in schools. Further insights will examine the specific comparison between findings from Numminen and Kasurinen (2003) and findings from this study.

The literature review has raised several themes for this study to observe throughout. Next the focus is on the methodology applied to this study.
CHAPTER FOUR – METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction
Having provided an introduction to the research, an explanation of the context and a literature review, here the research methodology is outlined. This chapter deals with the genre of study undertaken and the procedures by which data were collected. The selection of a research approach, and subsequently the method of data collection to be employed, require a considerable degree of thought. Bell highlights the relationship between the approach, the methodology adopted and the type of study taking place:

The approach adopted and the methods of data collection selected will depend on the nature of the inquiry and the type of information required (1999: 8).

The literature review raised many critical questions that require further exploration. Essentially my relationship with this research is as an evaluator with a specific aim. However, the extent to which I wish to explore critical questions and emerging themes with depth adds an interesting dimension to the nature of this study. The nature of the research and my position in the research are central elements to this chapter. The chapter begins with a description of the research tool and nature of the research. This is followed by an account of the research methods. The difference between the research methodology and research method is described by Tight (2003):

Methodologies refer to the underlying approaches or philosophies adopted by researchers, whereas methods are essentially techniques for data collection and analysis (2003: 184).

The methodology and the research methods are explained in this chapter. The data collection tools of unstructured conversations, personal narratives, questionnaires and interviews are outlined. The research methods are described under the headings of the research phases that were completed. An overview of the research phases is presented before describing each phase in detail. The triangulation approach chosen, which combines qualitative and quantitative research methods, is explained. The ethical principles that underpin the research are identified. Finally, the reliability and validity of the study are examined.
4.1 The Research Tool

The adapted framework for this research was highlighted in Chapter 1. It is based on two models. The first model that strongly influences the adapted framework is known as the Presage-Process-Product (3P) Model of Learning and Teaching (see Figure 4.1). This model elaborates on Dunkin and Biddle’s (1974) linear model of teaching to include approaches to learning creating an interactive system.

The 3P model describes three points in time at which learning-related factors are placed: presage, before learning takes place; process, during learning; and product, the outcome of learning (Biggs, 1999: 18).

![Figure 4.1. The ‘3P’ Model of Teaching and Learning (Biggs, 2001: 136)]

The model focuses strongly on learning. As my primary degree area is in teaching, my commitment to teaching and learning is reflected in the selection of an adapted research tool. In order to stay close to the nature of the study I have also drawn on an evaluation framework developed by The Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (Borgen, Hiebert and Michaud, 2009), which was presented at the 2009 International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance...
Conference (see Figure 4.2). This framework is used as it focuses on evaluation within the guidance counselling context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources available</th>
<th>Activities that link to outputs or deliverables</th>
<th>Indicators of client change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staff</td>
<td>Generic interventions</td>
<td>1. Learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of staff,</td>
<td>Working alliance, microskills, etc.</td>
<td>2. Personal attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level of training,</td>
<td>Specific interventions</td>
<td>outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>type of training</td>
<td>1. Interventions used by service providers</td>
<td>3. Impact outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Funding</td>
<td>Skills used by service providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Home practice completed by clients</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Service guidelines</td>
<td>Programs offered by agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency mandate</td>
<td>2. Involvement by 3rd parties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Facilities</td>
<td>3. Quality of service indicators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Infrastructure</td>
<td>Stakeholder satisfaction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Community resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many other similar models were considered before deciding on the adapted model for this research. Bimrose et al. (2006: 4) and den Boer et al. (2005: 13) describe how quality assurance in career guidance is often conceptualised in terms of an input-process-output model. Hearne (2010: 73) illustrates how these models are categorised in terms of the individual service level, organisational level and national level. While this research does not look at the graduate’s practice directly, it does look at the teaching, learning and practice of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling. Models offered by the guidance counselling research community focus strongly on quality management and financial means policy, whereas this research is more concerned with evaluating the GDGC at UL from a teaching and learning perspective. Therefore, drawing on a model from the field of education (The 3P Model) is necessary in order to achieve the research aim and objectives. Hearne (2010: 79) describes how, despite increasing pressure to
demonstrate inputs-processes-outputs in economically defensible ways in order to ensure continuance in funding in career guidance programmes, there has been little progress toward the development of accountability or evaluation models in career guidance, regardless of public demands for accountability. The intention of this research is to evaluate the UL GDGC to identify good practice in guidance counsellor education. The adapted approach used in this research can play a central part in the development of an evaluation model for guidance counsellors’ education programmes. Concepts from both the Borgen et al. and Biggs models are considered in the model applied to this study. This adapted model was illustrated earlier in the introductory chapter of this document (see Figure 1.2).

4.2 The Nature of the Research

The aim of methodology is to help us to understand not the products of scientific enquiry but the process itself (Cohen et al., 2000: 42).

As outlined above, the research tool is strongly influenced by the nature of the research. Tight (2003) describes how there is no general agreement on what the key methods and methodologies for social research are.

Much depends on the identity of the discipline, or sub-discipline, in which one is working, and on the methodological standpoint of the person making the categorization (2003: 185).

Essentially this study is an evaluation of a guidance counsellor education programme and my position is as an evaluator. At the centre of any education programme are teaching and learning; therefore the framework used in this study focuses on these concepts. In order to evaluate the UL programme it is essential to identify the aims and objectives of the GDGC programme. These are outlined in the course information booklet. The aim of the course is to qualify practicing teachers and other relevant professionals as guidance counsellors. The qualification participants receive is recognised by the Department of Education and Skills and the IGC for the purpose of appointment as a guidance counsellor.

The guidance counsellor brings to bear his/her professional skills in counselling to the personal, social, educational and career development of the adolescent. In order to fulfil their roles as guidance counsellors effectively, participants will
require a broad range of skills, techniques, understandings and information (University of Limerick, 2007: 2).

Furthermore, the particular focus of the UL programme on the counselling process is described under the aims and objectives.

In addition to familiarising participants with the necessary knowledge base and equipping them with the relevant professional competencies, the course will also strive to promote self-understanding and personal insight. Through this aspect of the course it is intended to provide participants with deeper understanding of the counselling process (University of Limerick, 2007: 2).

With the aims and objectives of the UL programme clearly set, one could say the research has clear goals to reflect upon.

The attainment of educational goals is central to the concept of educational effectiveness as an empirical scientific construct. Educational goals should thus be seen as the basis for the choice of output criteria in empirical educational effectiveness research (Creemers and Scheerens, 1994: 126).

However, this research aims not only to assert whether the goals of the UL programme are being met. It also undertakes a process of enquiry that will add to the theory and knowledge surrounding guidance counselling education programmes. With this in mind, it can be said that the nature of this research does not lie solely in the ‘effectiveness research’ field, but one which is concerned with exploring the process, depth and complexity of an education programme. The following section highlights the extent to which my methodological standpoint, along with the holistic nature underpinning the guidance counselling context, has influenced the nature of the research.

### 4.2.1 The Nature of the Research in Depth: An evaluation with Illuminative and Exploratory Characteristics

In this section the evolution and selection of the term ‘evaluation’ in the research title is presented. The methodological considerations involved when selecting the term ‘evaluation’ are explained, as the nature of the research is strongly influenced by the selection of this term. In order to evaluate the UL programme, the aim of the research is to explore the extent to which the GDGC at UL is in keeping with both national and international policy requirements in relation to initial education for guidance
counsellors. As the process of this study involves evaluation and exploration it is necessary to describe the nature of such processes.

Exploratory research is said to begin with a ‘phenomenon of interest’ (Polit et al., 2001: 19). It entails the study of the full nature of the phenomenon and any additional factors with which it relates. This study was to investigate, as broadly as possible, the GDGC at UL. At the outset of this thesis it was proposed that the study was exploratory in nature. The study was appropriately exploratory during the earlier stages as I was primarily motivated to search for knowledge surrounding the area of guidance counselling and guidance counsellor education. During the search for knowledge, questions requiring illumination emerged and challenged the exploratory nature of the research.

The researcher is motivated by a search for knowledge; the evaluator is motivated by the need to solve problems, allocate resources and make decisions (Cohen et al., 2000: 39).

As the motivation to both search for knowledge and problem solve are at the heart of this thesis it can be said that it contains elements of both exploratory research and evaluation. However, the term ‘evaluation’ can be interpreted differently in various settings. Methodological research literature clearly defines the difference between evaluating a programme and conducting research into a programme such as the GDGC at UL. Smith and Glass (1987), cited in Cohen et al. (2000), offer eight main differences which, when considered, problematise the use of the term ‘evaluation’. One of these differences is,

Research aspires to value neutrality, evaluations must represent multiple sets of values and include data on these (Cohen et al., 2000: 39).

As it is certainly my intent in this work to value neutrality, Cohen et al.’s description of an approach to evaluation is not applicable to the nature of this thesis. Furthermore, another difference listed is described as the intents and purposes of the investigation,

The researcher wants to advance the frontiers of knowledge of phenomena, to contribute to theory and to be able to make generalizations; the evaluator is less interested in contributing to theory or general body of knowledge. Evaluation is more parochial than universal (Cohen et al., 2000: 39).
Again, this description does not represent the approach to evaluation that supports the nature of this research. Robson (1993: 175) describes differing approaches to evaluation. One approach that is applicable to this thesis is illuminative evaluation, which is described as focusing on qualitative methods, inductive analysis and naturalistic inquiry. Parlett and Hamilton first introduced the concept of evaluation as illuminative in 1972. Burden (2008) describes how this was,

..... an early post-positivist attempt to focus upon the holistic study of educational programmes in order to throw light on what was happening, as it happened, from the perspective of all those involved (2008: 222).

The primary concern of illuminative evaluation is with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction. Because of this, Burden (2008) indicates that it can be seen to have been one of the primary precursors of the interpretive research paradigm. Burden (2008) describes how two main concepts underpin the illuminative approach, the ‘instructional system’ and the ‘learning milieu’. The instructional system refers to the process by which a curriculum is transmitted. Illuminative evaluation is based on the assumption that no curriculum is ever delivered in a pure, unaltered form. Burden (2008) states that based on this assumption the efforts of many ‘school effectiveness’ researchers to produce a single set of criteria that can predict how to produce an ‘effective school’ are meaningless. The second concept, the learning milieu, refers to the social-psychological and material environment in which teachers and pupils work together. Parlett and Hamilton (1977) describe how the learning milieu represents the network of cultural, social, institutional and psychological variables. Considering the central concepts of illuminative evaluation, it was determined to be the most appropriate form of evaluation to use given the nature of this study.

Various other terms were considered at the outset of the study, such as effectiveness, efficiency and efficacy. In a Finnish evaluation of educational guidance and counselling the Model for Evaluating Educational Outcomes (Koulutuksen Tuloksellisuuden Arviointimalli, 1998) was used by the National Board of Education in Finland. The model of evaluation they utilised comprised three elements:

1. Effectiveness, or how effectively the knowledge and skills produced by education promote individual learning on the one hand and the development of working life and the rest of society on the other.
2. Efficiency, or how well and functionally teaching provision has been organised and how flexibly the education system and its various parts operate;

3. Financial accountability, or how optimally the funds allocated to education have been used.

(Numminen & Kasurinen 2003: 9)

While this model is extensive it does not consider the important learning variables that illuminative evaluation covers.

Having problematised the nature of this thesis, the term ‘evaluation’ is offered in the title as essentially the research seeks to evaluate an existing educational programme in order to answer questions. Underlying the term ‘evaluation’ is the motivation for this study to seek knowledge, explore and illuminate new learning in the area of guidance counsellor education. Therefore the nature of this thesis is principally an evaluation with illuminative and exploratory characteristics.

4.2 The Research Paradigm

The selection of a research approach, and subsequently the method of data collection to be employed, requires a considerable degree of thought so that the ontological, epistemological and methodological questions are addressed. Guba (1990) describes the three basic questions to be asked when generating an inquiry paradigm:

Ontological: What is the nature of the “knowable”? Or, what is the nature of “reality”?

Epistemological: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?

Methodological: How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?

(Guba, 1990: 18)

These three questions serve as the major focus around which paradigms can be analysed for selection. My ontological position is based on my assumptions about how the world is made up and the nature of the world. Though it is difficult to deduct conclusively, I feel my worldview has been strongly influenced by life experiences and from the knowledge I gained from my initial teacher education degree. I feel that I am continually developing a depth of knowledge on my ontological self as I conduct this
study. My ontological perspective, my worldview, is heavily influenced by my understanding of the need for and potential benefits of guidance counselling as part of education. I also believe guidance counselling can be utilised in a way that embraces its potential value even further. The table below explains my position as an evaluator using a constructivist methodology.

Table 4.1: Evaluation and Constructivist Methodology (based on Guba & Lincoln, 1989: 109)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Constructivist Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Nature of Evaluation</td>
<td>Form of constructivist inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Values and Evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation produces reconstructions where ‘facts’ and ‘values’ are linked. Valuing provides basis for attributed meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Accountability</td>
<td>Accountability characteristic of a conglomerate of mutual and simultaneous shapers which limits possibility of praise or blame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Objectivity of Evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluators are subjective partners with stakeholders in the literal creation of evaluation data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Function of Evaluators</td>
<td>Evaluators are negotiators aiming for consensus on better informed and more sophisticated constructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi) Legitimacy of Evaluation</td>
<td>Constructivist evaluation data have neither special status nor legitimating; they represent simply another construction in moving toward consensus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guba and Lincoln (1989: 68) describe how

The ontological question is answered by adherents of the constructivist paradigm by asserting that there exist multiple, social constructed realities ungoverned by laws, causal or otherwise: a relativist ontology.

My epistemological stance is my beliefs about how one might discover knowledge about the world. The epistemology I adopt is described as social constructivist in nature as I believe that people generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas, and the context in which the learning occurs is central
to the learning itself. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context. McMahon and Watson (2007) discuss how,

Career psychology has witnessed a shift from approaches informed by tenets of the modern world to include approaches informed by the post-modern world as it strives to remain relevant. This shift is most evident in career theory and practice where developments reflect the influence of constructivism, but it is less evident in career research which has remained dominated by methodologies of the positivist worldview. These predominantly empirical methodologies seem incongruent with post-modern tenets. (2007: 169)

In order to stay true to the contemporary theoretical contexts of guidance counselling and to acknowledge my worldview in this study I take a social constructivist approach to the methodology applied. According to Usher,

What we can conclude from this is that methods are embedded in commitments to a particular version of the world (an ontology) and ways of knowing that world (an epistemology) (1996: 13).

The methodological approach to this study is affected by the ontological and epistemological perspectives I have adopted. Considering Guba’s (1990) three questions and the nature of the research, it was decided to generate a combined theoretical framework from both the positivist and interpretive educational research paradigms. Hearne (2010: 106) supports the call for methodological pluralism in guidance research and argues,

Findings from an interpretive study have the possibility to contribute to developments in the design of longitudinal systems in adult guidance which are primarily quantitative in nature.

However, arguments against methodological pluralism indicate that it can sometimes be used as an ad hoc solution. Corey’s (2008) description of the limitations of integrative counselling, and in particular the problems with eclectic models of counselling leading to surface knowledge rather than depth of knowledge, were outlined in Chapter 3. Corey indicates that a guidance counsellor must have a theoretical foundation approach that is close to a practitioner’s own ‘worldview’ in order to successfully implement an integrative model of counselling. Considering this I have chosen to underpin the methodological framework for this study with interpretive foundations, drawing on elements of positivist approaches in order to add depth and reinforce and strengthen
findings rather than broaden. This combination adds to the validity of the research as both approaches are drawn on in order to accurately represent the methodological, ontological and epistemological concepts underpinning the study.

Research is mainly approached from one or both of the following perspectives:

- Positivist
- Interpretive

‘Positivist’ and ‘interpretive’ are terms used to describe two perspectives on the nature of the world or reality. Whichever view we take will affect how we go about uncovering knowledge. A paradigm described in its most simplified form is a school of thought on a subject or topic. Guba and Lincoln describe a paradigm as a “basic set of beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimate or first principles” (1994: 107). The division that exists between the positivist and interpretive paradigms is reflected in the associated method-types used by the educational researcher. The positivist research paradigm involves the presentation of general statements and questions appropriate for statistical analysis, i.e., quantitative research.

Quantitative methods express the assumptions of a positivist paradigm, which hold that behaviour can be explained through objective facts. Design and instrumentation persuade by showing how bias and error are eliminated (Firestone, 1987: 16).

It is my intention to use this paradigm to reinforce aspects of the research question through the inclusion of closed questions in the questionnaire phase of the research. The interpretive research paradigm centres on the perspective of meaning and understanding, i.e., qualitative research. Interpretivism is the depiction of experiences and the understanding of different individuals in response to these experiences. Interpretivism recognises that human behaviour can only be understood when the context in which it takes place and the thinking processes that give rise to it are observed. Interpretivism and this research question are in alignment, as both are concerned with the illumination of context, processes and outcomes. Qualitative research has a central place in this research. This can be observed in the interviews, open-ended questions included in the questionnaire and in the narrative research phase.

A mix of paradigms is incorporated in this research. Greene et al. (1997: 8) describe three stances on mixing paradigms: the purist stance, the pragmatic position and the
dialectical position. Purists believe that only one of the research method-types can be used in an effort to remain true to the main beliefs of the paradigm. On the other hand, pragmatists believe,

The attributes of a paradigm are not inherently linked to either qualitative or quantitative methods. Both method types can be associated with the attributes of either the qualitative or quantitative paradigm (Reichardt and Cook, cited in Firestone, 1987: 16).

4.2.3 A Mixed-Method Approach

This research study uses a mixed-method approach. American writers Tashakkori and Creswell (2007: 4), in what they call a ‘deliberately inclusive’ definition, describe mixed methods as,

Research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry.

As well as applying a mixed-method approach, this research study also incorporates a multi-method approach. Therefore both qualitative and quantitative method types are used alongside a variety of data collection method approaches. A pragmatic research approach representing the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research has been undertaken.

A pragmatic, multi-method approach to educational research attempts to map out or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint, and in so doing making use of both quantitative and qualitative method types (Cohen et al., 2000: 112).

This type of research approach is particularly relevant to this research study, as Connelly (2009) suggests,

Good evaluations of the effectiveness of educational interventions are multi-method in nature, often involving a strong qualitative component running alongside a quantitative study (2009: 5).

The study is mainly a qualitative study in its attempt to evaluate the UL programme. Bell highlights the relationship between the approach, the methodology adopted and the type of study taking place, stating, “The approach adopted and the methods of data
collection selected will depend on the nature of the inquiry and the type of information required” (Bell, 1999: 8).

Quantitative research determines how one thing (a variable) affects another in a population. The closed-ended questions in the questionnaire will provide factual results for the research. However, due to the nature of the research a qualitative approach will be applied for the most part. Each of the quantitative and qualitative elements of this study is explained later in this chapter. While the research is said to incorporate a mixed-method approach, the proportion of qualitative research outweighs the proportion of quantitative research.

Bell informs us of how,

Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals’ perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis. They doubt whether social ‘facts’ exist and question whether a ‘scientific’ approach can be used when dealing with human beings (1999: 7).

A particular style of qualitative approach was necessary for most of the inquiry, as human beings were the participants involved in the data collection. As Burrell and Morgan (cited in Cohen and Manion) observe,

The emphasis in extreme cases tends to be placed upon the explanation and understanding of what is unique and particular to the individual rather than of what is general and universal (1994: 8).

The level of depth and understanding research studies gain from qualitative data is seen as a strength that this research study embraces. The strengths of quantitative research have also been considered. For the purpose of this research study quantitative statistical evidence is required in order to gain factual information on areas such as graduates’ career paths. This quantitative data will be sourced through the questionnaire. Qualitative research is used in this study to define preliminary questions and explore complex themes. The unstructured telephone conversations, the narratives of course directors, the open-ended questions and the interviews provide in-depth qualitative data. Altogether the research is applying a mixed-method approach by incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are
combined as part of the triangulation approach in order bring as broad an outlook as possible to the research.

### 4.2.4 Triangulation

“Triangular techniques are suitable when a more holistic view of education outcomes is sought” (Cohen et al., 2000: 115).

This research study employed two types of triangulation: multi-method and methodological triangulation. Cohen et al. (2000) describe multi-method triangulation as involving two or more methods of data collection, which attempt to explain more completely or holistically some aspect of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint, and in doing so making use of qualitative and quantitative method types. Furthermore, Cohen et al. suggest that the more the methods contrast with each other the greater the researcher’s confidence. The type of methodological triangulation applied in this study is *between methods triangulation*. This involves the use of more than one method on the same object of study.

As a check on validity, the between methods approach embraces the notion of convergence between independent measures of the same objective (2000: 114)

This was achieved in this study by triangulating qualitative and quantitative data from the questionnaire with data from the interviews.

This design combines elements of both positivist and interpretive paradigms to enhance validity, as each approach is reinforced by insights and techniques of the other approach. Triangulation is said to reduce bias and improve reliability, thereby strengthening the robustness of the research. Instances when triangulation is particularly appropriate are listed by Cohen and Mannion (2000), and these include “gaining education outcomes”. A number of benefits of conducting career guidance and counselling outcome research have been noted:

1. Outcome research conducted in field-based settings has the potential to influence policy makers (Plant, 2004; Speer, 1994).

2. **Outcome research is crucial to improve training for career counsellors** (Hartung, 2005; Plant, 2004).
(3) Outcome research is important to monitor and measure client progress (Plant, 2004).

(4) Outcome research is important to demonstrate that career guidance and counselling is worthwhile (Plant, 2004).

(Bernes et al., 2007)

A triangulation approach is said to have special relevance where a complex phenomenon requires clarification (Cohen and Mannion, 1994: 239). The complexity of studies surrounding the roles of guidance counsellors has been recognised; for example,

Any attempt to shape the field of CG by identifying what qualities and traits CG practitioners should aspire to develop, and what training programmes can do in order to promote the development of such traits, should be mindful of the complex and contested issues that surround the endeavour (Sultana, 2009: 29).

Triangulation is used to bring as broad a perspective as possible to the research question, therefore being considerate to the complexity of the research question of evaluating the GDGC in UL. Limitations of triangulation have also been considered. Sandelowski (2003: 328) commented that “having too much meaning, the word triangulation has no meaning at all”. Therefore it is imperative that the true sense of the word triangulation and the process of triangulation that have been described in this section are utilised during this study.

4.3 Research Methods

As explained above, this study uses a mixed-method approach that draws on both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Research methods are defined as a,

….range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation and prediction (Cohen et al., 2000: 41).

A variety of research methods have been used in this study. Thomas (2009) discusses how a method is a way of doing something, often with an intimation that it is being done systematically.

By systematic I don’t mean rigidly and formally, with tight, standardized procedures. Rather, I mean done in a considered, thought-through way (2009: 158).
These methods are discussed in the following section. Each method represents a phase that was completed during the study. The limitations to the research methods used are also considered.

An initial/preliminary phase was conducted at the outset (November 2007). This element of the research was qualitative in nature. The method used during this phase was unstructured telephone conversations to obtain personal experiences and oral folklore, therefore providing contextual understanding on the development of guidance counsellor education programmes throughout Ireland. Conversations took place with:

1. A retired guidance counsellor who is familiar with the development of the UL programme and is a tutor on the programme.
2. A tutor on a European programme.
3. A past director of the National Professional body for guidance counsellors (The Institute of Guidance Counsellors) who was central to the development of guidance counselling in Ireland.

This qualitative method was used to establish the context for the research and to generate preliminary research questions. The phase is not used to present any concrete research findings from which to draw discussion points or arguments. However, alongside the early literature reviewed, it did ignite my interest in gaining course directors’ perspectives before obtaining data from the research participants (graduates from the GDGC in UL).

Phase one involved obtaining personal narrative accounts from course directors. This phase was conducted in January 2009 and it was qualitative in its approach. Personal narrative accounts from two course directors of guidance counsellor education programmes were sought. These presented insights into the roles and influences course directors have on the guidance counsellor education programme they direct. This phase of the research emerged from the preliminary conversations that noted the strong influence of the course directors on guidance counsellor education programmes. Findings from this phase correlate with the input stage of the model for evaluation applied in this study.

The second phase consisted of a questionnaire that contained both qualitative and quantitative components. This phase took place in March 2009 and involved a postal
questionnaire that was distributed to 232 graduates of the UL guidance counsellor education programme. This research phase generated data documenting information from all responding graduates of the programme. Both open- and closed-ended questions were included in the questionnaire, in line with the objective of generating initial baseline data documenting topics such as the career paths of graduates. In addition the graduates’ experiences of the programme were recorded. The emerging themes were examined under the input, process and output framework as illustrated in the introductory chapter.

Interviews were selected as the final stage of the research. The interviews took place in September 2010. This third phase consisted of in-depth interviews with graduates who had completed the questionnaire phase. Thirteen graduates were interviewed. During these interviews interesting themes that emerged from the previous research phases were explored in depth.

In alignment with these phases the following tasks were also completed:

- Ethical approval for the research study was gained from the UL Research Ethics Committee.
- A pilot study was applied to both the questionnaire and interview phases.
- Connected research tasks such as papers and presentations (see Appendix 1).
- Gaining additional research skills: In order to enhance the research study I attended courses including questionnaire design, sampling, SPSS, Nvivo and para-counselling. I also gained a Certificate in Counselling and Psychotherapy and Reality Therapy.
- A personal methodological reflection (see Appendix 5).

These tasks were all completed in order to develop my professional profile as a researcher and to add to the rigour of the study.

The following section provides a critical perspective of each of the methods used during this study. A rationale for the selection of each of the methods is provided. The limitations of each of the methods is also discussed.
4.4 Research Method for Preliminary Phase

As outlined in the context chapter, extending evaluation models to include context, input, process and output factors is of huge value as understanding the context can potentially strengthen the research. Documenting the historical narrative was a worthwhile process in this study as it indicated (see Chapter 2) that the background of the guidance counselling community constructs the lens through which individuals interpret the profession. During the telephone conversations this lens was explored.

When beginning this research I had preconceived ideas about guidance counselling through my observations of the guidance counselling service in second-level education as both a student and a teacher. It was essential that I put these notions aside and establish a knowledge-based contextual understanding of guidance counselling from the outset. Cohen and Manion state,

> Observations are often described as subjective, biased, impressionistic, idiosyncratic and lacking in the precise quantifiable measures that are the hallmark of survey research and experimentation. (1994: 110)

My personal opinions on the subject may have led me to search for certain predetermined answers prior to the research being carried out. These opinions became better placed in understanding my ontological position and applying reflexivity. Reflexivity recognises that I am part of the research data by exploring and questioning my research practice. This concept is explained in detail later in this chapter. Stenhouse (cited in Hammersley) describes the role of the teacher as the researcher: “Theory is gradually built up from the examination of accumulated observations” (1994: 225). He continues by describing this method of research as ‘merely generalization’. Re-establishing my knowledge base of the guidance counselling community and applying reflexivity has minimised this restriction in the study.

4.4.1 Rationale for Preliminary Phase Method: Unstructured Telephone Conversations

This first research stage was concerned with accumulating my understanding through the collection of oral folklore surrounding the establishment of guidance counselling in Ireland.
Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that the researcher at this stage is comparatively passive and unobtrusive. Lincoln and Guba (1985), cited in Cohen et al. (2000), state that in order to eliminate or lessen the problem of reactivity (the Hawthorne effect) at this stage it is necessary to remain in the situation for a long time. I considered this comment carefully and spent one year establishing the research questions, considering frameworks for the evaluation study, upskilling and generating preliminary themes. Cohen et al. (2000) describe how the problem of reactivity can be addressed, “by careful negotiation in the field, remaining in the field for a considerable time, ensuring as far as possible a careful presentation of the research self” (2000: 156). This phase, along with writing the in-depth context chapter, has increased my background knowledge significantly. As an outsider to the area of guidance counselling this process has been invaluable in terms of my understanding. An added dimension to the evaluation model for an education programme has been successfully applied.

4.4.2 Method One: Unstructured Telephone Conversations

Three conversations took place over the phone between November 2007 and January 2008. The conversations provided a starting point for the research questions as preliminary insights into the oral folklore surrounding the development of guidance and counselling in Ireland and in other EU contexts were gained. During the literature review stage it was noted that a lack of information existed around the development of guidance and counselling in Ireland, and specifically in the area of guidance counselling education programmes such as the UL programme. Shiel and Lewis (1993) describe how in Ireland, “Relatively little published information is available on the evolution of the guidance and counselling service in schools” (1993: 5). Literature has been published more recently by the Department of Education and Science (DES), The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and the National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE), which is helpful in establishing an understanding of guidance and counselling in Ireland today. With this literature only evolving in more recent times I felt it was necessary to include archival and conversational material in order to
understand the growth of guidance and counselling in Ireland. These conversations were established in order to gain a greater understanding of the oral tradition and folklore surrounding guidance and counselling in Ireland and therefore gain a more concrete knowledge of the context of research. Ritchie (1995), cited in Roberts 2002, states that “oral history collects spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance” (2002: 93).

The telephone method was chosen as the most convenient medium by which to conduct unstructured conversations on the oral history of the development of guidance and counselling. The conversations were unstructured in order to allow participants the opportunity to generate research questions. McLeod (1999) describes unstructured or ‘free story’ conversations as circumstances “in which the interviewer outlines the area that he or she wishes to explore, but does not otherwise constrain what the informant says” (1999: 96). The telephone conversations began by introducing the research briefly and then letting the conversation run unstructured. These conversations aid to stimulate theoretical sensitivity and provide data. Data were collected through the researcher’s (my) note taking during the conversations. Patton (1980), cited in Cohen et al. (2000: 271), describes how the characteristics of such an informal conversational interview lead to questions emerging from the immediate context and being asked in the natural course of things. The strength of using this method is that it increases the relevance of research questions. Limitations of this method are also noted. This researcher found that conversations are less systematic and comprehensive if certain questions don’t arise ‘naturally’. Data organisation and analysis can also be quite difficult. Therefore this preliminary research phase was utilised mainly to establish a context for the research and to help inform the development of research questions for phases 1 and 2 of the research.

4.5 Research Method for Phase One

In the literature review chapter the influence of the course director on the guidance counsellor education programme was highlighted. Understanding the extent to which the course director inputs into the UL programme is a central aspect of the evaluation model used for this study. In order to gain insights into the course director’s influence, the method of personal narrative accounts was used.
4.5.1 Rationale for Phase One Method: Narrative Accounts

Bornat (1994), cited in Roberts (2002), describes how there is a common ground between oral history and biographical research as both are concerned with how knowledge of lives is constructed. Oral history was gathered using the method of unstructured telephone conversations described above. The method used in this research for gathering biographical data was narrative accounts from course directors of guidance counselling education programmes. Cohen et al. (2002) cite Goodson (1983) when describing how, Recent accounts of the perspectives and interpretations of people in a variety of educational settings are both significant and pertinent, for they provide valuable ‘insights into the ways in which educational personnel come to terms with constraints and conditions in which they work’ (2002: 165).

With the unstructured conversations providing general insights into the context of the research study a significant input factor of the ‘course director’s influence’ on a guidance counsellor programme emerged as a theme of further exploration from the preliminary phase through the method of a personal narrative account. It has been argued that the analysis of lives marks a significant ‘turning point’ in the human and social sciences: “a decisive break with positivist analyses towards a meaningful, interpretative, humanistic procedure in the understanding of lives” (Roberts, 2002: 132).

4.5.2 Method Two: Narrative Accounts

The emerging theme of the ‘influence of the course director’ is investigated through personal narratives from course directors, thereby exploring human aspects such as their educational background. A consideration for this stage of the research was the relationship between the researcher and the researched. One of the personal narratives gained required careful thought as a close working relationship between the researcher and the researched existed. Roberts (2002) describes the complex and multiple responsibilities of the researcher in these circumstances as centering on tensions between academic attachments and commitments to the researched.

As researchers we interpret our own lives as we interpret the lives of others and in research our own biographical experience and feelings are involved. This emotional contact should not be seen as merely a hindrance in research but as (inescapably) part of the research relationships which should be expanded upon through the reflexive monitoring of our own self-involvement (2002: 172).
Roberts (2002) explains how the researcher’s ability to be reflexive when dealing with the researched can add to the value of the data gained. Elliott (2005) describes the meaning of the reflexivity of the researcher:

Reflexivity means the tendency critically to examine and analytically to reflect upon the nature of research and the role of the researcher in carrying out and writing up empirical work. Having an openness about the choices we make as researchers (Elliott, 2005: 159).

Hollway and Jefferson (2000), cited in Elliott (2005: 159), describe a reflexive approach to the analysis of personal narrative data. They suggest that there are four questions that must be asked in relation to the analysis of any qualitative data:

- What do we notice?
- Why do we notice what we notice?
- How can we interpret what we notice?
- How can we know that our interpretation is the right one? (Elliott, 2005: 159)

The first three questions relate to the researcher’s ability to be reflexive. The final question is addressed in this study through a process known as respondent validation. A second reason for the inclusion of respondent validation is noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), cited in Cohen and Mannion (2003), who suggest that a validity check in the early stages of research is most important. When the narrative accounts were received the participants were then sent my summary of their personal narrative account. The participants read the summary in order to ascertain the accuracy of my account. The accounts were revised when required. The analysis of the personal narratives then took the form of content analysis to discover patterns and themes. Elliot (2005: 39) describes narrative analysis, which has a focus primarily on content. The content is described as both the individual life story and the story of the individual within a society. Shaw (1939), cited in Elliot (2005), describes categories of useful sociological information that narrative accounts give rise to:

1) The point of view of the individual.
2) The social and cultural situation to which the individual is responsive.
3) The sequence of past experiences and situations in the life of the individual.

(2005: 39)
It was decided that prompts were needed in order for the course directors to have some structure and guidance in relation to completing the personal narrative. Considering Shaw’s (1939) description of the information that narrative accounts give rise to, similar headings were chosen as a starting point for course directors to work from. They were given the following guidelines for the completion of the personal narrative:

The following broad headings may be used as guidelines for the completion of your Personal Narrative: ‘Your Philosophy of Life’, ‘Educational Background’, ‘Background in Guidance Counselling’ and ‘Blending the course you run with Policy’.

The data gained from the course directors’ personal narratives are analysed under the input phase of the model that this research applies for evaluating the UL programme.

4.6 Research Method for Phase Two

This is the main research phase as it reaches the participants of most concern to this study, alumni of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick. The questionnaire is also the most central phase of the research as it uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

4.6.1 Rationale for Phase Two Method: Questionnaire

In phase two the graduates of the guidance counsellor education programme were surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire devised by the researcher based on extensive reading of current literature and the generation of questions from the preliminary and first phases of the research. A semi-structured questionnaire was chosen as the most appropriate research tool for surveying the graduates as,

1. I wished to gain both facts and opinions from all 232 graduates from the programme.

2. The administration and efficiency of a questionnaire allowed access to the large number of individuals I wished to include.

The semi-structured questionnaire was selected as a research tool as it provides large-scale statistical results while also reflecting the underlying perspectives of graduates. The inclusion of the questionnaire phase is to gain an insight into the input, process and
output factors of the guidance counsellor education programme at UL. The output factors that this study observed include graduates’ career paths and competencies in relation to the role of guidance counselling. Sultana (2009) concludes his paper on ‘Competence and competence frameworks in career guidance: complex and contested concepts’ by describing how ways must be found to address the critiques that have been made of the different versions of competence-based approaches, particularly their tendency to,

(a) Be reductionist and fragmentary in relation to tasks that are complex and integrative of many dimensions of the self.

(b) Define good practice solely in relation to institutional norms rather than in consultation with practitioners or service users.

(c) Forget that there are aspects of human behaviour which are more likely to be caught rather than taught, and that, therefore, excellence is sometimes the result not of targeted training as much as socialisation into (and by) a community of established practitioners.

Considering the above points this research strives to apply a methodology that is respectful of the complexity of the area, is open-minded to the definitions of good practice across institutions, and acknowledges the significant human behavioural aspect. Based on this a questionnaire that combines both qualitative and quantitative questions (mixed-method approach) was developed. The questionnaire aims to identify the mixture of constructions that exist and bring them into as much consensus as possible.
4.6.2 Method Three: Questionnaire

Researchers must consider the information that they are attempting to collect, and design the questions for the intended users.

The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse (Cohen et al., 2000: 246).

Selecting a questionnaire as a method of data collection provides many benefits. However, it is important to utilise questionnaires correctly. Structuring the questionnaire in a way that is user friendly improves the success of the questionnaire as a data collection method. Altogether the questionnaire consisted of 31 questions focusing on the key areas of career paths, competency and continuing professional development. To make the layout clear the questionnaire was divided into five sections. Cohen and Manion explain how one must “Arrange the contents of the questionnaire in such a way as to maximize co-operation” (1994: 96). The questionnaire (see Appendix 8) was divided into five sections:

- **Section 1: General Information**
  This section included questions in relation to the participants’ input factors such as gender, age group, reasons for choosing the course and funding support.

- **Section 2: Career Path**
  This section strives to generate data to document graduates’ past and present careers.

- **Section 3: Your Impact on Guidance Counselling Services**
  This section uses a four-point Likert Scale to observe graduates’ roles in relation to the eight competency areas outlined by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE, 2004).
Section 4: Continuing Professional Development Needs
This section aims to establish knowledge in relation to guidance counsellor continuing professional development needs under the headings of the specific competencies required during the role of the guidance counsellor.

Section 5: Additional Information
This section provides the graduates with the opportunity to make any comments in relation to their experience of the UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling.

The questionnaire was designed to be non-threatening and user friendly, achieved by the use of an uncluttered booklet layout. The questionnaire began with simple, closed-ended biographical questions and open-ended questions were only used when essential, to avoid participants being required to write excessive amounts. The questionnaire was distributed with a return envelope and information detailing the purpose of the research and the anonymous nature of the questionnaires. Consent to participate was acknowledged in the completion and return of the questionnaires as a signature would invalidate anonymity of the individual respondent. A total of 38% returned the questionnaire.

4.6.3 Piloting
Questionnaires do not emerge fully-fledged; they have to be created or adapted, fashioned and developed to maturity after many abortive test flights. In fact, every aspect of a survey has to be tried out beforehand to make sure that it works as intended (Oppenheim, 2000: 47).

While this sounded daunting in the beginning I soon realised the benefit of undertaking a rigorous piloting stage. The questionnaire was piloted in order to ensure validity and to heighten the effectiveness and response rate of this method of data collection. Several formats of the questionnaire were drafted for discussion with the research supervisor. The questionnaire was evaluated by the statistical consultancy unit at UL and two postgraduate research students, and formal piloting took place with two past graduates of the programme. The experience of the statistical consultancy unit at UL and my two
postgraduate colleagues provided valuable feedback as both advised me to consider variables to be measured for each question before administering the questionnaire. Considering this aspect upfront helped hugely in the long run. Feedback in relation to problematic areas was gained from the two graduates mainly in terms of understanding certain questions, and changes were made to the questionnaire where appropriate.

4.6.4 Open- and Closed-Ended Questions

As already mentioned, two question types existed within sections, open-ended and closed-ended questions. As both contain advantages, a combination of both was used in the questionnaire. Youngman, cited in Bell, describes ‘verbal’ or ‘open’ questions as follows:

The expected response is a word, a phrase or an extended comment. Responses to verbal questions can produce useful information but analysis can present problems (1998: 119).

Open questions were used to provide in-depth accounts of particular issues within sections. They allow the respondent to provide detailed feedback specific to the question. The extensive data gained from the open-ended questions were presented on an Excel database and analysed categorically. These categories were identified following an overview of the responses. Closed questions were used throughout the questionnaire to provide specific information based on a selection of predetermined responses. These closed questions were analysed using descriptive statistics with the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4.7 Research Method for Phase Three

The final phase of the research explores in depth the emerging themes from the data gained in phase ones and two. Interviews were selected as the appropriate method for data collection at this stage of the study. This phase is qualitative throughout.
4.7.1 Rationale for Phase Three Method: Interviews

Interview is the final research method used, defined as “a conservation with a purpose” (Berg 2001: 66). Thirteen graduates of the UL GDGC were interviewed. A semi-structured interview was chosen as the most appropriate research tool for interviewing graduates, as I wished to explore themes that emerged from the questionnaire phase in depth, while also allowing the space for new information to emerge. Therefore the objective of the interviews was to expand on findings from the questionnaires. Cohen and Manion explain how interviews can allow for such expansion and development:

One advantage, for example, is that it allows for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection (1994: 272).

It is perhaps this ‘greater depth’ that the interview can produce which enhanced its attractiveness as a research method. Through this method of research more specific issues in relation to the nature of the overall investigation could be discussed. Cohen and Manion explain how interviews can be used as a means of gathering information having “direct bearing on the research objectives” (1994: 272). With this in mind the research objectives of this investigation were considered when shaping the contents of the topic guide for the interview. The qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge production; its purpose is to obtain knowledge of the phenomena investigated (Kvale, 1996: 78).

4.7.2 Method Four: Interviews

Thirteen interviews of approximately one hour’s duration took place. While certain conversational aspects of the interview may be developed, for the most part the interviews remained formal and structured. The interview, therefore, can be said to combine elements of both structured and semi-structured interview. In terms of displaying competency and upholding a degree of professionalism, I deemed it to be considerably more appropriate to select the structured interview as opposed to the non-directive interview. Within the confines of the structured interview, the “contents and procedures are organized in advance” (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 273). For this investigation an interview schedule (see appendix 15) was used for structure. The aspects of semi-structured interview are incorporated when a deeper insight is acquired as to the individual’s personal feelings and experiences.
It is believed that in an interpersonal encounter people are more likely to disclose aspects of themselves, their thoughts, their feelings and values, than they would in a less human situation. (Kitwood, 1977 cited in Cohen and Manion, 1994: 282)

In the event of the interview drifting off inadvertently into the irrelevant, the structured interview should provide resolution by re-directing the interview towards the topic guide. Hammersley describes such a situation:

The interview situation may work against the interviewer, for example the interviewee to release information not relevant to the research but which attempts to restrict the researcher in other activities related to the research. (1994: 129)

The interview was divided into five sections in which the five themes emerging from the research were explored.

The Themes

- Part 1: Theme – Personal Background/Philosophy.
- Part 2: Theme – Exploring Current Role and Role Identity.
- Part 4: Theme – Continuous Professional Development Needs and Impact of the Programme.
- Part 5: Theme – Overall Programme Evaluation.

In order to successfully conduct the interviews a structured process took place. This process involved 12 stages.

1. Summarise questionnaire results in order to determine areas to explore in interview.
2. Prepare interview schedule.
3. Arrange pilot interview.
4. Carry out pilot interview with feedback sheet.
5. Send respondent validation.
6. Transcribe/analyse and consider feedback on pilot interview.

7. Arrange interviews with 13 graduates (from both on campus and outreach centres, who completed the questionnaire).

8. Revise interview schedule.

9. Conduct 13 interviews.

10. Transcribe/summarise/get critical friend to read.

11. Send respondent validation.

12. Analyse interviews.

Before conducting these interview phases, an additional consideration that was addressed at the outset was my own ability to conduct interviews successfully. Oppenheim (2000) discusses the importance of interview skills:

Probably no other skill is as important to the survey research worker as the ability to conduct good interviews (2000: 65).

Considering the interviewees’ knowledge and experience in relation to one-to-one interviews due to the nature of their roles as guidance counsellors, I was particularly aware of my need to upskill in order to present the research in a professional manner. I attended courses that focused on aspects such as listening skills and communication. Oppenheim (2000: 65) notes that the interview, unlike most other techniques, requires interpersonal skills of a high order. In developing my interview skills I became increasingly aware of the problems associated with, sometimes unconsciously, leading the conversation and introducing bias. Attending professional development courses where feedback was gained following practical interview scenarios helped greatly with improvement in the area. Cohen and Manion describe how,

The sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the substantive content of the questions. (1994: 282)

Upskilling and developing an in-depth interview schedule to focus the interview created a scenario where bias did not play a role in limiting the interview for this study. The
following section details the extent to which ethical considerations were embedded throughout the study.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Any research that involves humans must be considerate of the effect the study could potentially have. In light of the sensitive nature of guidance counselling it was essential that the well-being of all participants was maintained. Ethical considerations were highlighted from the outset. Ethical approval was sought and subsequently granted from the UL Research Ethics Committee (see appendix 12). Thomas (2009) believes that application forms for ethical approval principally act to protect universities from litigation: ‘Its procedures seemed to be more about self-protection than protection of research participants’. My ethical stance stems beyond self-protection to deeper concerns regarding potential emotional risks to participants. Knowing that personal development was a significant part of the UL GDGC, I was aware that by asking participants to reflect on the UL programme I may in turn ignite difficulties graduates encountered during the personal development stages of the programme. Every effort was made to reduce the risk of such a scenario developing. Ethical standards and protocols were used throughout the study to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. Ethical principles in research can be compared to the code of ethics guidance counsellors adhere to in their everyday roles. For example, the Code of Ethics (2007) of the national professional body for Irish guidance counsellors (The Institute for Guidance Counsellors) describes how,

Guidance counsellors respect the dignity, integrity and welfare of their clients. The professional services offered by guidance counsellors involve a special relationship of trust and confidence (IGC, undated).

The NCGE also devised a Researcher Code of Ethics in 2008 (see Appendix 11). The code consists of four overall ethical principles that include a number of specific ethical standards. I chose these ethical guidelines to inform this research study. The four principles are listed as:
Chapter Four – Methodology

1. Respect for the Rights and Dignity of the Person

2. Competence

3. Responsibility

4. Integrity

(NCGE, 2008: 1)

Within the heading of respect for the rights and dignity of the person, sub-headings of privacy and confidentiality, informed consent and freedom of consent and self-determination have all been considered in this study. The relationship between the researcher and the researched must be one of trust and respect. I have sought ethical awareness and continuing professional development in relation to research methods in order to be a competent researcher. Within the heading of responsibility I have upheld accountability and responsibility.

Be sensitive to the needs, current issues, and problems of society when determining research questions to be asked, services to be developed, information to be collected, or the interpretation of results/findings (NCGE, 2008: 13).

I have sought to promote integrity in the undertaking of this research by being honest and accurate in conducting and presenting the research. It is fundamental to seek ethical approval from a relevant ethics committee. Throughout the entire research process I kept the value of truthfulness and maintaining participant dignity as the main priorities.

Ethically this involves taking the view that people own the facts of their lives and should be able to control the use that is made of them in research (Hammersley 1994: 190).

The nature of the study involved a relationship of trust between the research participants and myself. Voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality were applied to the questionnaire and interview phases of the research. Consent is described by Thomas (2009: 149) as an agreement of people to take part in the study. Thomas (2009) indicates that more than a simple agreement is required: informed consent is necessary. In other words, potential participants should understand what they are agreeing to (Thomas, 2009: 149). In order to be respectful of each participant and represent their
expressed experiences accurately, care was taken to ensure the research was as reliable and valid as possible. Reliability and validity are discussed in the following section.

4.9 Reliability and Validity

Cohen et al. state that it is ‘inevitable that the researcher will have some influence’ (2000: 175). It is essential that the research is represented as accurately as possible. In order to do this reliability and validity are considered carefully. Reliability, according to Woolfolk (2008: 629), is “the consistency of test results measured by looking at the comparability of scores on two different occasions or of two equivalent versions”. Reliability therefore refers the consistency of the research method and examines the extent to which the data can be repeated. Bell states that reliability is,

The extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions (2005: 111).

The consistency with which questionnaire participants understand and respond to questions ensures reliability. Parahoo (1997: 269) states that,

The reliability and validity of questionnaires can be greatly enhanced by careful preparation and skilful construction, paying particular attention to the needs and circumstances of potential respondents.

In the planning stage of the questionnaire rigorous piloting ensured maximum reliability. The length, language used and structure of the questions were all considered carefully when devising the questionnaire. As the questionnaire was the same for each graduate, with the same questions and the same instructions for completing the questionnaire, its reliability was strengthened. The data from each questionnaire were inputted to SPSS using a structured value/coding method and the results were interpreted objectively. To establish the reliability of the questionnaire and interview methods, findings were cross-referenced for question Q8(a) and Q10(a) of the questionnaire and structured questions from the interview schedule. Cross-referencing indicated similar answers for both questions, therefore ensuring the reliability of the selected questions.

If an equivalent form of the test or instrument is devised and yields similar results, the instrument can be said to demonstrate this form of reliability (Cohen et al., 2000: 118).
This method of testing reliability was not applicable for every question included in the questionnaire and interview. Therefore, in order to establish reliability of single questions the test-retest method was applied. This “involves administering the questionnaire on two occasions and comparing the response” (Parahoo, 1997: 273). Two respondents to the questionnaire phase and one from the interview phase agreed to redo the data collection three months after each test was initially administered. Comparing the responses from both occasions indicated reliability for the questionnaire, and to a slightly lesser extent the interview. The interview on the second occasion was limited by time constraints that provided less detail.

Validity is defined as a demonstration that a particular instrument in fact measures what it purports to measure (Cohen et al., 2000: 105). Feldman describes validity as,

> The degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific topic that the research is attempting (2003: 26).

Validity, according to Woolfolk et al. (2008: 630), is “the degree to which a test measures what it is intended to measure”. Various validity checks can be described; however, the validity methods used in this study reflect Guba and Linclon’s (1989) views on what validity measures are most appropriate:

> The ultimate test of validity of any inquiry findings is that they should describe reality exactly.

The Psychological Corporation (1995) state that two issues are relevant to the validity of psychometric tests: the extent to which the test items actually represent the defined goals of the test (content validity), and the extent to which the test represents the theoretical contrast it is intended to assess (construct validity). Content validity was applied to the questionnaire as the content was reviewed by two colleagues with extensive research experience. Each colleague was instructed to comment on the relevance of each of the questions considering the central research questions. A two-page document detailing these questions was administered with the questionnaire for reference. These colleagues affirmed the appropriateness of the questions.

Construct validity is a more difficult concept to clearly ascertain. This study examines if the theoretical model (input, process, output model) is well represented by the research method. Triangulation is said to be a powerful way to demonstrate construct validity.
Triangulation was applied in this study as outlined in detail earlier in this chapter. Reflexivity, which has also been described earlier in this chapter, also adds to the validity of the study. Omitting possibilities of bias was a central consideration throughout undertaking this study. Efforts to omit bias were consistently made by presenting questions objectively and reflectively. Bell highlights the difficulty with doing this during interviews: “Interviewees are human beings and not machines” (1993: 139). Eliminating bias on the author’s part assists in validating the data.

One way of validating interview measures is to compare the interview measure with another measure that has already been shown to be valid. (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 281)

This kind of comparison is known as ‘convergent validity’. In this study the questionnaire and interview are used as methods of investigation, thereby allowing for this type of validity to take place. For example, in both methods graduates were asked for their reasons for doing the programme. Validity is shown when the answer given in the questionnaire is similar to the interview answer.

If the two measures agree, it can be assumed that the validity of the interview is comparable with the proven validity of the other measure. (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 281)

Validity is also established throughout piloting and respondent validation; other are said to play a significant role in ensuring validity (Cohen et al., 2000). The questionnaire and interview phases were piloted extensively, as outlined earlier in this chapter. Respondent validation was applied to the course directors’ narratives and interview phases. This concept of validation is also explained earlier in this chapter.

4.10 Conclusion

Thomas (2009: 70) discusses the importance of being clear about what methodology is. Methodology, he states, is the study of method, while ‘ology’ means to talk about or study something. He describes the methodology chapter as follows:

It is a discussion of the methods that you are going to be using and more importantly why you are using them (2009: 70).
In this chapter I outlined the nature of research and my relationship with the research in order to position the methodology of the study. The adapted model for evaluating the UL GDGC reflects my commitment to teaching and learning aligned with the nature of the evaluation. My position can be described as an evaluator drawing on the illuminative and exploratory characteristics of the study. The adapted evaluation model reflects this research stance appropriately. From determining the paradigm in which this study is best placed a constructivist methodology emerges as the research combines a positivist, and to a greater extent interpretive, paradigm approach. A mixed methodology for this study heightened reliability and validity, thereby strengthening the robustness of the research. The research methods in the four phases of the research (preliminary, first, second and third phases) provide both qualitative and quantitative data. The four phases were outlined in detail in order to clarify how and why I used each of the methods. A description of how ethics, validity and reliability are all considered carefully throughout this study was included in this chapter. The data were collected in respect of this methodological design, along with constantly considering each of the central research questions for this evaluation. The data were analysed considering the input, process and output framework established for exploring the central research questions. The methods used for analysis of data and the findings are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE – DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methods of analysis and present the findings from all stages of the research. The analysis and findings for the preliminary phase (unstructured telephone conversations) are outlined briefly as the results for this stage were considered to enable the researcher to set the context and to establish research questions for phases one and two. This chapter is presented in two sections. Research findings, both qualitative and quantitative, for phase one (narrative accounts), phase two (questionnaires) and phase three (interviews) are outlined in detail in the main section of this chapter. A combination of three analytical approaches was used. Firstly, textual analysis was applied to draw themes from the course directors’ narratives, transcripts from the open-ended questionnaire sections and the interview transcripts. In order to add to the initial textual analytical approach and optimise data use, a constant comparative method was employed. Thomas (2009) discusses how this is a form of illuminative analysis which adopts assumptions of interpretivism. He explains that the basic analytic method of the interpretative researcher is constant comparison as it stands behind every technique in this paradigm:

The constant comparative method involves going through your data again and again, comparing each element – phrase, sentence or paragraph – with all of the other elements (2009: 198).

The outcome of this method of analysis is that you emerge with themes that capture or summarise the contents of your data. These themes are then mapped to show interconnections between them. This process is known as construct mapping (Jones, 1985; Thomas; 1992, cited in Thomas, 2009). Thomas outlines the importance for undertaking this step:

The aim in using an interpretative approach is to emerge with the meanings that are being constructed by the participants (including you) in the situation.

Quantitative data gained from the questionnaires was inputted directly to a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a quantitative data analysis software package. This data was then analysed using the statistical package. The findings for each of the research phases are presented under the input, process and output headings in
accordance with the model of evaluation being applied to this research. The second section of this chapter presents a construct map which highlights themes which originally emerged through the qualitative data from the narrative accounts and questionnaires, but were also evident in and supported by interview data. The questionnaires and the subsequent interviews generated a vast amount of qualitative data and information. Presenting this data using a construct map ensures the optimal use of the research findings. The procedures used to analyse the research data are discussed when appropriate throughout this chapter.

5.1 The Preliminary Phase
During the preliminary phase unstructured telephone conversations took place in order to establish a more in-depth understanding of the context of the research and to support the generation of research questions. Each conversation began with a brief introduction of the research topic, which merely involved stating the title of the research. Presented here are the significant comments brought to light during the conversations. Notes were taken during the conversations and naturally arising areas are presented below.

5.1.1 Unstructured Conversation One: Past IGC Director
This conversation took place with a person who has contributed to the sparse literature on the history of the development of guidance and counselling in Ireland. This person has been heavily involved with the national professional body for guidance counsellors (IGC). Furthermore, this person was on the course team for one of the guidance counsellor education programmes in Ireland. During this conversation it was confirmed that “very little is known about the development of Guidance Counselling in Ireland” and this person also noted that they knew “very little about the University of Limerick Programme”, as they have retired since its development. However, they also noted that guidance counselling before they retired was very much “developed and based in the Dublin area of the country rather than the mid-west”. This person notes how it is good that the guidance counselling community is now “countrywide”.

From this conversation I noted the importance of this research study in documenting the development of the UL guidance counselling programme and the geographical
consequences for the guidance counselling community following its development as an outreach programme.

5.1.2 Unstructured Conversation Two: Retired Guidance Counsellor

The second conversation took place with a person who practised as a guidance counsellor in the mid-west region for a number of years. This person has worked as a mentor on the UL guidance and counselling programme since its establishment in 1997. This person trained as a guidance counsellor in Ireland in the 1960s and describes how during this time many travelled to the United Kingdom in order to train as guidance counsellors. “A huge amount of people went to study in Swansea as there was a fierce shortage of locally based programmes such as the one the University of Limerick now runs”. This conversation continues emphasising the importance and need for a part-time programme for guidance counsellors in Ireland at the time, especially when the “IGC were pressing for more guidance counsellors”. The course design team’s role in recognising the demand for guidance counsellors and the need for an easily accessible programme is noted at this stage of the conversation. While the UL programme was addressing the location and part-time needs of people wishing to train as guidance counsellors it is also recognised that it is “an expensive programme with demanding entry requirements”. The conversation then delved into guidance counsellor education programmes’ content and methodology. It was noted how there are differences between “the guidance counsellors and the course syllabus of fifteen years ago and now”. One of the differences noted is that participants of guidance counsellor education programmes now receive one-to-one counselling. This person also describes the role of a mentor on the programme when they describe the role as a ‘befriending’ process.

From this conversation I noted the importance of the course design team, location and part-time aspect of the programme. A further understanding of the context in which the programme developed and an interest in the course content and teaching methodologies was generated.
5.1.3 Unstructured Conversation Three: European Context

This conversation took place with a central figure regarding the development of guidance counselling at a European level. This person directs a guidance and counselling research centre in a European University which also has a master’s programme in guidance and counselling. This person was involved in a national research study of guidance counselling in their country and also conducted a follow-up study on graduates from the masters programme in guidance and counselling. During this conversation the importance of follow-up studies into graduates is noted as extremely important. This person describes how the follow-up study they conducted led to significant developments in the programme they run. This person also noted the importance of considering the economic and social context in which such a study is taking place. It was described how similarities between guidance and counselling in their country (Finland) and in Ireland exist.

From this conversation I noted the importance of a follow-up study with graduates in order to contribute to the development of the UL guidance and counselling education programme.

5.2 Phase One: Course Directors’ Personal Narratives

As outlined in the literature review variation between countries exists with regard to the content and methodology of guidance counsellor education. From analysing the course directors’ personal narratives, the role they play in the programme they run is observed under the headings of Input and Output factors. Analysis of the narrative accounts took place by summarising the narrative accounts in my own words and applying respondent validation (as outlined in Chapter 4) in order ensure my interpretation was correct. The course directors’ narratives were then cross-referenced with each other and different elements of the narratives were then categorised into themes. This form of analysis is known as textual analysis. Fairclough (1992: 73) states that the procedure of textual analysis is called description. Furthermore, the element which deals with the analysis of the discursive practices and social practices of which the discourse is a part of is called interpretation (1992: 73). An independent moderator read the narrative accounts and categorised themes. Any discrepancies were discussed and the final themes were agreed.
For the most part the findings are observed as input factors and minimal process and output factors can be observed in the narrative documents. Six themes emerged and are presented in this chapter. Under the input factor heading themes of external influences on the guidance counsellor education programme, the course directors’ education, course directors’ national roles and significant influences are asserted. A process factor theme is the course content and teaching methodology and the output factor theme of a vision for student output factors emerges. The findings from two course directors’ personal narratives are presented, the UL course director, referred to as course director A, and a course director from another European guidance counsellor education programme (UK), referred to as course director B.

5.3 Phase One: Input Factors

5.3.1 External Influences on the Guidance Counsellor Education Programme

Firstly observed in both course directors’ narratives were the external influences on the course they run.

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) had through its executive set down specific requirements for various elements of programmes of study in guidance counselling. I did not view these national standards as limits to my personal and professional interests. I felt very reaffirmed by these national standards as they set out the IGC’s requirements in both content and duration of the counselling theory and skills, experiential group work and professional issues of any emerging programme (Course director A)

In course director B’s narrative it is noted how government and professional body links are observed in the course content; however, central to this is the influence of the course director in annually updating the programme considering policy documents.

All the materials are updated before each enrolment to ensure that all the latest policy documents are included so that students are able to support their organisations in critiquing and contributing to the debate in relation to new and potential policy. (Course director B)

5.3.2 The Course Directors’ Education

The second input factor observed is the influence of the course directors’ own educational strengths on the programme they run.
Elements of the programme which were very strong from the beginning were the counselling theory and skills, the experiential group process, which closely reflected the strengths of myself (Course director A).

In contrast, course director B describes an educational background with a focus on career advisory.

Twenty years ago this summer I registered on the Diploma in Careers Guidance at Kent College for the Careers Service in Swanley. I was interested in working within education but didn’t want to be a teacher and becoming a careers advisor appeared to be an interesting career. (Course director A)

A rationale for the evidence of a course director’s educational background on the programme they run is documented later in the narrative. The UL (course director A) describes how the first external examiner for the programme, concluded that the strong focus on “the psychology of the human person” and “theories and practice of counselling” were as a result of the focus of the education programmes which the course director studied.

(name extracted) pointed out that the programme could just as easily be focused on a sociological or testing/assessment slant. He discussed with me how the professional development of course directors has a very strong influence on the type of programmes which they develop, lead and teach on. This came as no surprise to me as I know that I was ‘playing’ to my professional strengths. I was also aware that I was ‘playing’ to my personal and my broader educational strengths. (Course director A)

### 5.3.3 Course Directors’ National Roles

Both course directors documented in the narratives that before becoming leaders of guidance counsellor education programmes they were involved in national projects regarding guidance.

I developed an interest in quality issues and got involved in the pilot for the Guidance Council Quality Standards when they were being developed in 1999 (Course director B)

Course director A was involved in a producing a National document on the role and functions of a guidance counsellor.

I had worked for a year on the National Executive of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, during which time the Executive drafted and published a
document mapping out the specific role and functions of the guidance counsellor and the guidance service within second level education. This work also influenced and shaped my thinking at the design stage of the programme. (Course director A)

5.3.4 Significant Influences

When the personal narratives are examined closely it can be seen that both course directors document a significant influence on their lives with links to the type of course they run. In course director A’s narrative the education they received in the area of client-centred therapy stands out as influential when analysing the narrative.

The work of Carl Rogers in particular influenced me deeply at this stage of my life. His focus on the quality of relationships with people, which includes, empathy, non-judgmental positive regard and genuineness were conditions for helping others. (Course director A)

In course director B’s narrative it shows how practice rather than education was the major influential point.

I had the opportunity to get involved in training voluntary and community advice workers. I spent the year travelling around the Black Country working in lots of estates and training providers supporting practitioners to understand and develop their adult guidance skills. It was this experience which probably had the most profound effect as I became and still am passionate about professional development for practitioners. I worked with some practitioners on very poor estates who were barely literate but we were able to work through and get them a qualification. (Course director B)

5.4 Process Factors

5.4.1 Course Content and Teaching Methodology

The influence of the course director on the course content and teaching methodologies used transpired during the narrative documents. The course director’s areas of strengths are noted to influence the strengths of the programme:
Elements of the programme which were very strong from the beginning were the counselling theory and skills, the experiential group process, which closely reflected the strengths of myself. (Course director A)

The course directors’ ‘wants’ are recognised as influencing the course content and teaching methodology:

The course is very purposefully focused on continuing professional development rather than initial training. There are plenty of other courses who offer initial training. I want our course to be different, I want students to return to theory and reflect on their practice, to consider how they work as a practitioner and how they want to grow and develop (Course director B)

5.5 Output Factors

5.5.1 Vision for Student Output factors

The final extract chosen from each of the narratives shows that while variation between course directors’ backgrounds, practice and education exists, the overall vision they aspire to for their students is quite similar.

We want our students to be able to make informed and considered contributions to the debate within their workplace, their professional associations and with their peers. We want our students to be critical thinkers who can challenge from an informed and considered perspective. (Course director B)

Students on the Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling are both challenged in their thinking processes as well as in their interpersonal and intrapersonal domains of learning. (Course director A)

The emerging themes are explored in comparison to the questionnaire and interview findings in the second section of this chapter. The following section presents the questionnaire data.

5.6 Phase Two: Questionnaire

The analysis of results begins by observing both qualitative and quantitative data surrounding inputs, processes and outputs to the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling. The qualitative data was textually analysed using Excel. It must be acknowledged that a vast amount of the qualitative data presented in the following
sections is drawn from the final question: ‘Please comment on your experience of the UL programme’. Cohen et al. (2000: 255) state,

It is the open-ended responses that might contain the ‘gems’ of information that otherwise might not have been caught in the questionnaire.

The last question in the questionnaire did in fact “invite an honest, personal comment from the majority of respondents” (Cohen et al., 2000). The quantitative data was analysed using the statistical software package SPSS. Variables obtained from the questionnaire phase can be analysed in a number of ways. For the most part the quantitative data (nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio data) from the questionnaire is analysed using descriptive statistics “simplification, organisation, summary and graphical plotting of numerical data” (Thomas, 2009: 213). Descriptive statistics is a form of uni-variate analysis where each variable is looked at individually. Frequencies (percentages) are a form of uni-variate analysis and frequency charts are used for all categorical data. A second type of analysis used is bi-variate analysis where cross tabulations are performed to examine how two variables relate to each other. Inputs examined include student factors such as funding and the reasons graduates chose to participate in the programme. Course context factors such as the infrastructure, communications, resources and devised programme content are examined. Process factors analysed include the learning experiences graduates had during the programme, and outcome factors examined include the service and careers of graduates following completion of the programme.

5.7 Input factors

5.7.1 Student Demographics

Considering all the questionnaires posted (n=232) and the completed questionnaires returned (n=85) a response rate of 37% was obtained. However, when considering 11 of the n=232 questionnaires were returned to sender, as graduates could no longer be reached at the postal address, a response rate of 38% can be calculated.

The returned questionnaires presents the following findings in relation to student input factors:
The interpreted gender split of the original n=232 students has the following breakdown, 73% female and 27% are male. However the validity of this statistic is questionable as the breakdown is based on my interpretation of female and male names. However a gender imbalance exists amongst the questionnaire respondents, suggesting that more females undertake the programme than males. 68% (n=58) of the graduates are female.

Figure 5.1. Bar chart of Gender, n=85

When analysing the age of respondents it is necessary to consider that the respondents may have graduated up to 10 years ago. Considering the variation amongst the graduation dates of respondents the findings with regard to age groups can be described as ‘well distributed’ between the ages of 31 and 60. However, only 2.4% (n= 2) are in the 26 to 30 age bracket. Figure 5.2 illustrates the distribution of age groups amongst graduates.
The demographics of the cohort group to which respondents belonged are also necessary to consider when observing the research findings. Figure 5.3 outlines the unequal distribution of respondents’ cohort groups. However, this is due to the fact that of the 232 questionnaires distributed the majority of graduates were from UL (6 cohorts), Carrick on Shannon (5 cohorts), Dublin West (2 cohorts) and Kerry (1 cohort). Therefore the UL (more recent graduates) and Kerry graduates responded at a greater rate than the outreach students in Carrick on Shannon and Dublin West. This breakdown was considered when choosing the research instrument and location factors for the interview phase of the research. I decided to commit to conducting the interviews in a way that represented the outreach and on-campus locations evenly.
Student funding is observed in Q7 (a). With only 16.5% of participants receiving funding or part-funding, a substantial financial commitment to the programme is evident. One such participant commenting on the programme being “enjoyable but damned expensive”. However, many note that the fact that the programme is part-time is attractive and supports their continuation in the working environment. “The part-time aspect has allowed me to stay at work”. One respondent notes the significance of the part-time aspect of the programme:

I was not in a position financially to take a year off to study, so the part-time nature of the course made it accessible. (Questionnaire respondent)

Of the 16.5% who had received funding, the following sources were mentioned: the Marino Institute, school’s board of management, education finance board, employer, respective VEC, claimed tax relief, teacher refund scheme, grant for in-service
development and teachers fund administered by Mater Dei. In terms of the number of applications required before being selected to participate in the programme the majority (94.1%) were accepted on their first application, with the remainder (5.9%) accepted on their second application. Participants were also asked if they felt they had sufficient information about the programme at the application stage. 84.7% (n= 72) answered yes and 15.3% (n= 13) answered no. Findings in relation to past occupations show that 82.4% (n= 70) of the programme’s participants worked as teachers, with one respondent working as a guidance counsellor and one as a deputy principal before undertaking the programme. 14.1 % (n =12) worked in occupations outside of teaching. As the UL programme is a graduate course all entrants have degrees prior to entry. The following Figure 5.4 indicates the degree areas students had on entry to the UL course.

![Figure 5.4 Degrees students had on entry to the UL course](image)

**5.7.2 Reasons for choosing to participate in the University of Limerick Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling**

Graduates were asked to indicate the reasons (from a list of 15 stated reasons constructed at the literature review and piloting stages) they were attracted to the UL programme. Part-time convenience (89%, n= 76) and location (82%, n= 70) had the highest ratings (see Figure 5.5).
In addition, graduates were asked to comment on ‘any other reasons’ that attracted them to the UL programme. Twenty six percent (n=22) of respondents listed ‘other reasons’ for participating in the UL programme. Other reasons included “I liked that it was continuous assessment and had no written exams”; “A friend encouraged me”; and “A colleague encouraged me”. Comments surrounding role change or enhancement included “To keep my options open should I need to move from role as school principal”; “For my professional development”; “position was coming up in the school”; “I always had an interest in the area, also I thought it might help me move to another school”; and “Serious issues arising in school situation that needed professional approach (suicide, abuse)”; and one respondent indicated

I felt I had the necessary skills and competencies to work well in this role. I enjoyed the change from teaching Irish and English. My involvement with LCVP also prompted this interest. (Questionnaire respondent)
5.7.3 Tutor Input Factors
With regard to tutor input many made comments in relation to the nature of the relationship between the tutors and students in the ‘Any further comments’ question. Tutors were described as having “genuine interest in students with staff interaction positive and helpful, overall excellent”. An even mixture of comments was recorded. Positive comments towards tutors on the course include “high level of student interaction and good level of support from tutors”. Negative comments include “I felt sometimes the tutors were not well enough prepared”. One respondent describes how a lack of preparation leads to disappointment: “I was often very disappointed with the lack of preparation made by one or two of the teachers delivering the programme, especially after driving 3 to 4 hrs”. Another respondent expresses how the lecturer’s background in guidance counselling practice was insufficient:

While individual lecturers were very competent there was a sense that they did not have sufficient experience of guidance and counselling. (Questionnaire respondent)

The affect of the level of input from lecturers is summed up by one respondent when they state that “the energy and interest of the tutor determined the quality”. One respondent describes a possible scenario of negative tutor input.

I think that the counselling element provision/training should be delivered with kindness, compassion and understanding – as guidance counsellors do in their work with students – not by fear, intimidation, lack of understanding. This person should be approachable, as most professionals in the whole are. (Questionnaire respondent)

5.7.4 University Input Factors
Advance planning was also recognised at administration levels of the programme: “administrative/organisational issues could have in some instances been better, some more planning in advance”. One respondent expresses satisfaction with the course but dissatisfaction with the administration at institutional level:

While I enjoyed my time on the course and am happy enough with the content, I would be disinclined to attend UL again because of administration difficulties; they seem to be a really big issue. (Questionnaire respondent)
However, in contrast, organisation was also recognised as a strength of the programme, with the counselling aspect of the course noted to be the most organised element.

The UL programme was to a large extent very well organised and well run, especially the counselling aspect. (Questionnaire respondent)

One respondent indicates the effects of requirement pressures on the course:

The course was much too intense and operated to validate the programme rather than to meet the personal and professional needs of the participants. (Questionnaire respondent)

5.8 Process Factors: Teaching and Learning

When observing the qualitative data for process factors aspects of the programme content and methodology which aided the learning process for participants emerged. Many commented on how they liked the assessment for learning approach: “I liked that it was continuous assessment and we had no written exams”. However, it was also noted on some occasions that this type of assessment was quite demanding: “I resented having to complete so many essays”. One respondent questioned the value of assessment:

It felt at times that using essays was a lazy teaching mechanism in light of the fact that feedback was extremely limited. (Questionnaire respondent)

A number of responses highlighted the secondary school focus of the programme – “The course was tailored towards second level educational system” – as being “frustrating”, especially when working in an adult guidance context: “The assumption that all participants were second level teachers was sometimes difficult”. One respondent stated that there was a “limited amount of exposure to adult guidance”. One respondent describes how course content was focused on second level when they state that the “project and summer work were tailored towards the secondary educational system, e.g., educational topics assigned as projects”. A suggestion is made in relation to the inclusion of adult guidance by one respondent:

I believe guidance in relation to adults should become a necessary or compulsory component of the course, because adult needs are different to teenage needs. (Questionnaire respondent)
Comments in relation to the type of learning experienced include reference to the underpinning experiential methodology of the programme: “I thoroughly enjoyed the experiential nature of the course” and “a great learning experience both personally and professionally”. Particular areas of the course such as class size and the final year project were noted as effecting learning positively:

An excellent course, which covered a wide range of subjects, classes were small enough for personal attention and the final year project added very much to my skill set and knowledge base. (Questionnaire respondent)

Suggestions in relation to improving the learning experience are made by a number of respondents. These suggestions include:

Real attendance at personal counselling is essential for both personal development and for modelling good practice. I believe those who do not fully participate in this element lose out. (Questionnaire Respondent)

The bonding weekends away were very good but perhaps would be more beneficial, especially in Year 1, earlier in the year. (Questionnaire Respondent)

Specific feedback on course content was also offered by respondents, such as

The video interview was a joke. Some had it so rehearsed it was false; others who went the honest way were penalised. (Questionnaire Respondent)

and

I thought the practical skills in counselling were very helpful but I would have liked in the 2nd year to have worked with models of counselling that applied to the type of counselling we are involved with, which is short-term. (Questionnaire Respondent)

Two respondents suggested blending theory with practice.

While the theory aspects of the course were interesting there wasn’t a huge effort made to relate this to the everyday work of the guidance counsellor (Questionnaire Respondent)

The course had too much theories rather than the application of these theories to a ‘school situation’. (Questionnaire Respondent)
5.8.1 Specific Barriers to Learning Outlined by Outreach Students

During analysis it was decided to specifically observe comments regarding barriers to learning experiences which were expressed in the final question ‘Please comment on your experience of the UL programme’ with location (on campus /off campus). Comments included in this section were highlighted by graduates who completed the programme at outreach centres. No such comments were expressed by graduates of the on-campus programme.

The facilities then, especially the library, were terrible. Management of the course was not satisfactory either. Supervision of the thesis was also unsatisfactory. I received no information or guidance from my supervisor. (Questionnaire Respondent)

There was poor communication between UL and Kerry on several occasions. UL did not respond to queries or emails and when I questioned someone the 'buck' was always passed. (Questionnaire Respondent)

Although the content of the course was very relevant, the organisation of the course left a lot to be desired. Library facilities were very limited, thus making research and study very difficult. (Questionnaire Respondent)

Experienced some issues due to the offsite location of the course in Dublin such as access to services, library, feedback, etc. (Questionnaire Respondent)

We were promised a small library which never materialised. It was extremely difficult for outreach students to do essays. There was also an issue about 1st class honours. Nobody in our group got one despite being within the grades necessary. (Questionnaire Respondent)

5.8.2 The Focus of the Guidance Counselling Education Programme

A significant finding is in relation to the personal counselling focus of the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling. I have placed this finding as a process factor due to the focus on the learning involved in personal counselling; however this finding is also transferable to the input and output factors of the programme. Figure 4 illustrates that just over 30% of graduates chose the programme due to its focus on personal counselling and many questionnaire respondents make comments regarding the value of the input of the personal counselling focus. Comments included “Heavy emphasis in the course around the counselling side of things. Well worth doing”. While many positive comments with regard to the process of the personal focus of the UL programme
Chapter Five – Data Analysis and Findings

existed. Personal motivation is indicated as being central to the learning experience, in particular, the personal learning gained during the programme by one respondent.

I think I really enjoyed it because I was really motivated to learn. I attended counselling for the first time in order to fulfil the requirement. It was scary first but it really brought charge in my life. I am a better teacher and person because of it. (Questionnaire Respondent)

Some comments expressed a weakness in the programme’s lack of focus on careers education. “The area dealing with careers exploration and practical work regarding careers information, etc., was very poor.”

As the data surrounding the focus of the UL programme was so extensive (50% of respondents made comments with regard to the balance of the content of the course in the final open-ended question) it was necessary to distil these comments into themes from the outset. The following is a statistical breakdown of these comments:

9% of the 50% of respondents indicated that there was not sufficient weight given to career guidance:

I felt it was very lacking with regard to developing knowledge and skills in the career area/subject choice area/course selection area, which is a huge part of the work. (Questionnaire Respondent)

10% of the 50% commented that they were unhappy with the balance of the course between career guidance and counselling:

Felt the course was a little top heavy in terms of the counselling aspect and very little was done on careers. (Questionnaire Respondent)

26% of the 50% indicated their satisfaction with the focus on counselling:

Very strong on counselling training. I have found this of huge benefit in my role as a guidance counsellor. (Questionnaire Respondent)

5% of the 50% of comments mentioned the course was well-balanced:

I was pleased with the programme for the following reason: excellent balance between guidance and counselling. I felt my skills were very well developed in both areas. (Questionnaire Respondent)

Comments which are inconclusively positioned within one of the four categories include one respondent stating that
When I embarked on the programme I was very much aware of the time given to counselling as part of the course. However, in stepping into the ‘careers’ class I felt very much in the dark. I relied heavily on others for support and spent more than an average amount of time planning for classes. That said, I still would not change the counselling aspect of the course. (Questionnaire Respondent)

One respondent commented on the discourse surrounding the balance of the programme by stating that

When I did my course the most common grumble from my classmates was that not enough time was devoted to CAO issues, etc. Presuming they were intelligent and that they could read I thought this was something they could adequately do in their own time. The counselling aspects & personal development were things that could not be learned from a textbook and hence I think it was right to devote the majority of the course to these parts. (Questionnaire Respondent)

5.9 Output Factors

5.9.1 Reflective Points

Overall the main body of questionnaire respondents reflected on the programme as a very positive experience. The main justification given for this positive effect was due to the level of personal development gained. Many comments noted the significant personal learning outcomes of the programme:

Overall a positive experience. I grew a lot personally from the programme and my professional career was enhanced greatly from doing the course. (Questionnaire Respondent)

It was a very positive experience. The course contributed greatly to my own self-development and greatly helped me to carry out my duties as deputy principal in a more enlightened fashion. (Questionnaire Respondent)

Respondents reflected on their experience of the programme and a number offered suggestions based on their experience, such as “I would recommend this course for all principals”. One respondent indicates that their philosophy of education relates to the educational experience they had:

My experience of the UL programme was that it was challenging, stimulating and educational. To someone who still believes that ‘the proper study of mankind is man’. (Questionnaire Respondent)
One respondent discusses how in hindsight they would have approached the programme:

When doing the diploma I was under serious work pressures. I should have and could have shed some of these in order to enjoy the programme more. I enjoyed the emphasis on counselling. (Questionnaire Respondent)

On reflection, one respondent acknowledges the significance of the course:

I think it should also be acknowledged that the mid-west is well served by this course. In summary, at the time I did not realise what I was being given but now see the course as a seminal point in my career. (Questionnaire Respondent)

5.9.2 Graduate Diploma or Masters Award Level?

Several of the respondents indicated a discrepancy with the level of award gained on completion of the programme. Comments surrounding the excess level of content include “the content covered over the two years of the course is far too much for a graduate diploma; other graduate diplomas have much less contact for the same qualification”.

I felt the work/assignments/thesis undertaken for the graduate diploma was in excess of my masters work completed in applied geophysics (MSc hons). (Questionnaire Respondent)

Further comparisons to other courses were made and all of these comparisons were made favourably toward the UL programme: “It was an excellent programme, especially when compared with other programmes”, and “The best course I have completed. I have three postgraduate qualifications.”

5.9.3 Guidance Counselling Roles

When graduates’ current work tasks were explored it was found that providing an information service was the task most often required, followed closely by providing a counselling service. The chart 5.6 below indicates the distribution of roles which graduates are currently undertaking.
Graduates were also asked to indicate their ideal role and the following can be observed:

![Current Role Diagram]

**Fig. 5.6: Current Guidance Counselling Role**

![Ideal Role Diagram]

**Figure 5.7: Ideal Guidance Counselling Role**
5.9.4 Career Paths

Following the career paths of graduates it can be observed that 72.6% (n= 61) are presently working as guidance counsellors. Of these guidance counsellors data shows that 56% work as second-level guidance counsellors; 15.5% work in the adult guidance sector; 4.8% in principal roles, 10.7% in deputy principal roles; 6% as year heads; 6% curriculum co-ordinators; and 7.1% work as self-employed guidance counsellors. 15.5% listed they were in other employment such as human resources, training consultancy, youth reach co-ordinator, psychiatric nurse/counsellor (HSE) and marriage counsellor. These figures representing career paths are not reflective of a 100% breakdown as some respondents indicated employment in more than one role, such as being the school guidance counsellor and a year head. see Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8: Career paths following the completion of the University of Limerick programme

Some respondents indicated that they were very happy in their career; none highlighted otherwise: “Overall a tiring but well worth doing course. I am in a job I love and I learn new things every day”.

5.9.5 Continuing Professional Development Needs

When questioned regarding Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs no definitive answer emerged. Figure 5.9 shows the breakdown between those who feel there are or are not enough opportunities for guidance counsellors to seek CPD and those who are unsure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are there enough opportunities for guidance counsellors seeking CPD?</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(32.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>(27.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>(40.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think CPD should be accredited?</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>(67.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(25.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.9: CPD Needs and Accreditation

Graduates are, however, more decisive with regard to CPD accreditation. In Figure 5.9 one can observe that the majority of respondents do feel CPD should be accredited. 48.2% (n=40) have undertaken further formal education following the completion of the UL programme. Several respondents listed an MA in guidance counselling as the type of further education they had received. Some of the emerging areas in which further education took place are indicated as: whole school guidance planning, reality therapy, BSc in Psychotherapy and counselling and psychometric testing. In relation to professional body membership, 88.2% of graduates are members of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors. Comments regarding the CPD provided by the respective branches are mainly positive, such as

Excellent resource. I cannot express how important it is to have a branch in local education centre. This is where I learn to plan, share expertise. When it comes to experts the IGC branches are a good example of how CPD should be run. (Questionnaire Respondent)

Some respondents indicated time “no time” and travel constraints as limiting their access to CPD provided by their respective IGC branch. Furthermore, some respondents indicated the focus of second-level guidance counselling as limiting:

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CPD is usually centred around guidance counsellors working in 2nd level schools – very little for those people working in adult guidance or 3rd level institutions. (Questionnaire Respondent)

A final question asked graduates to indicate to what extent the design of the UL programme met their expectations. The following figure 5.10 represents the respondents answers.

Figure 5.10: The extent to which the design of the UL programme met expectations
5.10  Phase Three Interviews
The final phase of the study involved interviews. The interviews were conducted with graduates from the UL GDGC programme to explore the themes which emerged from the questionnaire phase. Each of the themes is considered using the model for evaluation applied in this study. These themes are listed as sections which formed the interview schedule and can be listed as

Section 1: Personal Background/Philosophy (Input Factor)
Section 2: Learning Process and Assessment (Process Factor)
Section 3: Exploring Current Role and Role Identity (Output Factor)
Section 4: Continuous Professional Development Needs and Impact of the Programme (Output Factor)
Section 5: UL Programme Evaluation (Output Factor)

Two pilot interviews took place before conducting 12 interviews with graduates from both on-campus (6 interviews) and outreach centres (6 interviews). Analysis of the interviews took place by summarising the interview transcripts in my own words and applying respondent validation (as outlined in Chapter 4) in order ensure my interpretation was correct. The transcripts were then cross-referenced with each other and different elements of the interviews were then categorised into themes. This form of analysis is known as textual analysis. An independent moderator read the interviews and categorised themes. Any discrepancies were discussed and the final themes were agreed. The findings from these final themes are described under the sections outlined above.

5.11  Input Factors

5.11.1  Reasons for doing the programme
An input factor into any learning programme is the participant’s reason for attending the programme. No interviewee described one specific reason for choosing the programme; instead several central reasons emerged. Many graduates documented the importance of having a guidance counselling qualification in order to increase their employability as
the reason they choose the programme. Interviewees noted how principals require more than one teaching area. With one interviewee describing the scenario he experienced:

I found that a lot of principals would have liked their staff to have more than one string to their bow. (Interviewee)

The reduction of hours in the teaching context is documented as an influence towards doing the programme. A qualification in guidance counselling can increase hours.

I was effectively going to go to a part-time job, an even more part-time job than I had already. So I wanted something else that would increase my employability. (Interviewee)

One interviewee describes how working as a guidance counsellor is a way of staying in the education environment: “I was kind of looking for something else that I could do in a school environment”. Interviewees highlighted how they spotted a gap and aimed to fill it: “we needed a guidance counsellor here in the college”. Movement from the classroom to the guidance counselling role was described by one interviewee as not exactly their ideal situation: “I didn’t necessarily want to move out of the classroom”. At a later stage in the interview one interviewee, who is not in the teaching environment, reflected on her colleagues doing the GDGC:

I would say that there were some people that were teachers that I felt were doing it (the GDCG) looking for permanency, and I think guidance counselling is something that needs a level of vocation that a lot of those people would not have had. (Interviewee)

Other reasons for choosing the programme include the part-time aspect: “the fact that it was a part time course was very attractive”, and the location: “convenient as I didn’t have to go to Dublin or Belfast”. The counselling focus was also referred to in answering this question:

I knew that there would be a lot of counselling involved in the course so I was prepared to give it a chance and to give it a go I suppose, but it wasn’t ideal. What I wanted to do was the career education, career guidance as such. (Interviewee)

I thought that counselling was something that I had an affinity for and I felt that I could qualify myself and then I could work in that area. (Interviewee)
One other respondent indicated how their personal qualities led them to a counselling role: “they [students] used to always come to me anyway”. Some interviewees also highlighted an aspiration: “the desire to make a difference” to respond to learners’ needs as a reason for undertaking the programme. Addition personal motivation was indicated by one interviewee: “I wanted to do something as well for personal development for myself”. Positive past experiences influenced some interviewees decision to do the programme. A recommendation from a past graduate of the programme was noted: “I got some good feedback from her (past graduate) and that influenced me to put my name down for it”. Previous experience in the guidance counselling role attracted one interviewee:

I had great interest in careers from a previous experience by default. Ten years prior to doing the course, I was basically asked to help the guidance counsellor and I enjoyed it so much that I always wanted to do it and I seized the opportunity when it presented itself. (Interviewee)

5.11.2 Necessity of Teaching Experience

The interviewees were asked to indicate their roles previous to undertaking the programme and 11 of the interviewees worked in teaching roles, 8 of these being in second-level and 3 in adult education. The remaining interviewee did not directly refer to herself as a teacher but as “working on adult training programmes”. When asked if they felt teaching experience was necessary to become a guidance counsellor the majority response was “Yes”. Comments which supported this belief included the following:

I think it is yes because you need to be in a school environment, you need to know how the school goes on, like the day goes on and how discipline works and that kind of stuff so that you’re not completely estranged from what the school situation is because it is very dominated by behaviour. (Interviewee)

One interviewee discusses the importance of teaching experience in the adult education context:

I think it is very important because I think to be a guidance counsellor you have to understand where the student is coming from but also the academic requirements that are there. (Interviewee)
An additional perspective suggests that teaching experience is required in second level but not when working in adult guidance settings. “While I feel that teaching adult guidance you wouldn’t have to be a qualified teacher”. The potential benefits of combining the teaching and guidance counselling role are outlined by one respondent:

I think it’s definitely more beneficial to be teaching because you know the kids a bit better. You know what they are capable of doing and you can suggest things for them to do maybe, more so than coming in from outside and not having taught them. (Interviewee)

It is indicated in one interview that teaching experience helps but it is not a necessity:

It helps because you can understand particularly the subjects, the levels of subjects, what’s involved in a subject, the assessment of subject, the demand on the teacher and the pressure on the student to get an exam. (Interviewee)

This interviewee further suggests that somebody with, for example, “an industrial background” brings a level of experience which “teachers don’t have” and they bring a guidance counselling role with a “different aspect to it”. The experience of a graduate of the UL programme who does not have a teaching qualification or experience is noted. She describes a scenario where she could not get a guidance counselling position in a second-level school following her completion of the UL programme:

I realised that my lack of teaching experience when I went for the interview, you know, showed up. So then I kind of thought I am not going looking for any jobs any more in schools because I am not going to get them. So I felt that I was at a big disadvantage because I wasn’t a teacher. (Interviewee)

The interviewee’s suggestion is that from the outset “UL should be letting people know” of the requirements in relation to obtaining a guidance counselling role in second-level education settings.

5.12 Process Factors

5.12.1 On-campus and Outreach Learning Experiences

All interviewees were asked to describe the learning experience. Six of the interviewees completed the programme at an outreach centre. A variation between the learning experiences of outreach students and on-campus students was expressed. On-campus
students mainly indicated that they were “very happy with the learning experience”. One respondent highlighted that the teaching methodologies used were positive:

I thought the learning experience was very good, the way the education was delivered was different because every lecturer went along with a more experiential method of education, which I thought was very good. (Interviewee)

Outreach students noted that the location was ideal and made the course very accessible: “The location made it possible for me to do the course”. One respondent discusses the benefits of having the course in a secondary school:

Yes the (location extracted) was perfect; it worked out really well. And we were able to access the guidance counsellors’ library that was there as well. We could see what an office was supposed to look like to a certain extent. So that was good and the fact that it was a school setting was good as well. (Interviewee)

However, one other interviewee sees this same location in a different light as she indicates that “it was like there was a different atmosphere when we went to the summer schools in UL”. She expands on this point to say,

There was a university life focus, whereas a slight negative would have been that it was like second level and you didn’t have the library resources and like you saw the focus there was different. (Interviewee)

A lack of library resources and facilities are noted by outreach students. One respondent describes how “trying to access resources was really difficult”. This was a “big problem”. Another interviewee suggests local teachers and resources should be used rather than getting lecturers from UL.

There is a wealth of resources of people in (location extracted) and in the surrounding areas that could have facilitated those courses and because that didn’t happen, I mean obviously them people were, ........they didn’t like the fact that two nights a week that they had to travel down to (location extracted) from Limerick. (Interviewee)

5.12.3 Administration and Part-time Learning

In relation to the administration of the programme comments interviewees noted that the programme was “very well organised” and “I thought it was well administered”. One respondent outlines the level of organisation:
An interviewee with an outreach perspective states that “most of it (administration) was done from Limerick”. He describes how this can be problematic:

There was a lot of organisational aspects that we questioned when we were doing the course and we weren’t really able to be in touch with everybody that we needed to be in touch with it because we were so far away. (Interviewee)

Interviewees were also asked about how they found the part-time aspect of the programme. Mainly respondents indicated this was “an excellent aspect of doing the programme”. One respondent highlighted the financial advantage to the part-time course; his feelings regarding course delivery are noted:

It suited me perfectly to make a few bob and the right way to deliver it as far as I am concerned. (Interviewee)

However, some interviewees indicated that they found the part-time element difficult:

I found it challenging and difficult because I would say I was working and I had a young family. (Interviewee)

5.12.4 Reactions to Specific Modules

Interviewees were asked to give their reactions to the modules included in the UL programme. The majority of respondents commented firstly on the counselling modules and the residential in particular was focused on. However, as counselling theory and practice was the first module they would have undertaken maybe this reflects why they commented on the module at the outset.

Counselling theory and practice and the residential weekends, I remember that very, very well and it’s a thing I sort of copped out of it, in that I didn’t really immerse myself fully in it. I went through the existential exercises but I held back quite a bit of myself and sometimes I think it was a missed opportunity. Most of the time I think, well done (name extracted). It was heavy duty stuff but it was good. (Interviewee)

The experience felt during the counselling theory and practice and residential weekends varied amongst interviewees. One respondent describes the module as “a bit of a disaster really”. The reason she gives for this is that “it was almost as if, if we didn’t give of our insides we weren’t partaking of the process”. This interviewee indicates that
the group size was not conducive (“very uncomfortable”) to this type of activity. “It’s just the group was too big”. Her suggestion is that it “could have been done in two smaller groups of 10 very easily and that would have been fine”. A comment which is general to the whole programme stated that “a lot of what we did in pairs was very good”. Another respondent describes the feeling of the larger group experience:

We were a group of 21 or 22 and we were all in this circle and it was all very tense and really I felt like the success was if somebody broke down and cried every night and I decided after the first night that there was no way I was going to disclose anything about myself in front of the 22 people, no way! And a number of other people decided that as well. I would give them so much to keep them happy. You could say, like, every week in that circle in that module somebody broke down and cried about something, I don’t think that’s necessary. (Interviewee)

One respondent describes how overall the content was “actually quite good except for one part”. She elaborates on this element and she suggests what needed to happen:

I do remember it was a group session and we were asked to share a personal thing. We shared that and I just remember that it was, well there was a lot of hurt feelings, you know it brought up a lot of hurt feelings to the fore and I don’t think they were dealt with. I don’t think there was any debriefing afterwards. (Interviewee)

The experience of such a scenario is also described by this interviewee: “It was almost like you were made to feel like you had to share something” and “everybody shared something”. She describes the feeling afterwards as “awful” and said, “I know from speaking to my colleagues afterwards that was an awful thing for other people as well”. Another interviewee describes how “they go very deep into people and I think some people felt uncomfortable”. In contrast to these comments one interviewee notes how the residential weekends were “perfectly timed, in the middle of February”. The importance of timing is explained:

I think we were ready for it, it kind of was a milestone for me personally and for other people in the group probably, it came at the right time, it broke the ice for an awful lot of people, including myself, where we moved to an upper level after that or another tier of openness and honesty so that was perfect, the first residential (Interviewee)

The particular type of counselling is noted by one respondent. He describes how Rogerian counselling is “something that is given preference” but that it is less useful in school settings due to time constraints.
Additional comments that were made in relation to the learning experience include the experiential elements being “well received” and “enjoyable”. The “variety of teaching skills was liked” and the overall programme was said to have “a nice variety of modules”. Some respondents indicated a weakness in the Information Technology component of the course “IT was a joke”. One interviewee suggests, “maybe if there were different stages. It was delivered too much at introductory level”. The group dynamic was also noted as a significant learning dimension: “the group dynamic is a great way of learning”.

Some of respondents highlighted that they “felt over-assessed” and some felt it was “just about right”. In relation to this one interviewee notes that

> It seemed like I was always busy and I always had something to do, but I think that is not necessarily over-assessed either. I think it was challenging and I think you need that; I think you feel like it is worth while then. (Interviewee)

### 5.13 Output Factors

#### 5.13.1 Current Role and Role Identity

Interviewees were asked what it means to them to be a success as a guidance counsellor. Barriers, “staffing and timing issues”, to becoming a successful guidance counsellor were indicated in some cases before answering the question. One interviewee indicated that to be a success “you have to give time. I think that there is a big problem. Guidance counsellors, I think, don’t usually have the time”. A similar comment describes how a lack of time limits his work:

> I feel it is difficult to be successful as a guidance counsellor as there is an issue with the whole time constraints area. I feel if I was given an allocated correct amount of time to deal and support students with the whole pastoral vein of the school then I feel my job would be successful. (Interviewee)

Comments vary regarding the meaning of a successful guidance counselling role. One respondent chose the “caring skills” “such as reflecting back skills” and the ability to make the client comfortable as being central to success in the role. Education was also mentioned by this interviewee as they describe how “somebody who has taken on board all the skills they might get taught in a course” would then be “honing in on those
skills”. Some interviewees also comment on specific outcomes in their work which would indicate success. One respondent describes how success is

….bringing on that kid….. a student who will come with either no ideas of what they want to do, a sixth year student now this would be, who has no ideas even what they want to put on their CAO form.......this is an able student, has over 500 points or more, has a vague idea of what she wants to do but needs to be brought that extra step to be reassured that she was picking the right thing and that maybe there was other options that she hadn’t explored so for those, even though able students, success means knowing that I brought that kid, you know, that extra couple of inches....... just to reassure her. (Interviewee)

One respondent describes a situation where with a weaker student “your instinct is that, you know, let’s not give her our him all the time” and to be a successful guidance counsellor you need to “keep on track and give an even, I suppose, service to both”. This respondent highlights the difficulty with doing this as the tendency is to think

Let’s not give Johnny here time because Johnny is going to end up, you know, in the local whatever (Interviewee)

Achieving balance in the guidance counselling role is indicated as what determines success by one interviewee.

It’s where students would reach difficulty in either academic or personal areas and I would be available to them to help them through that, then I feel I have been successful. Also if I guided someone through 3rd level to an appropriate course then I feel I would have been successful with the counselling side and the careers side. (Interviewee)

One interviewee indicates a preference towards counselling in her role but suggests that this requires a change of views.

I see a lot of kids on one-to-one and that would be the most important side of it for me, the whole holistic side of it. I am trying to get away from the whole ‘I am just guidance’, you know; it’s the counselling part of it that is important for me. (Interviewee)

This interviewee develops this point by discussing how she is “trying to raise the profile of it (counselling)... so that students know” it is a service they can avail of. Interviewees were probed following the question regarding what it means to be successful and asked, “Is it important to be caring, altruistic, helping, genuine, empathic in the guidance counselling role?” When probed by the question these characteristics were all noted to
be of equal importance: “These are really the core values of the guidance counsellor”.

One respondent expands on her answer by saying,

Being caring is important but not developing a relationship where a student is depending on you, it is more important that the boundaries are tighter... the longer I’m in this job the more I realise that students very often come in looking for a solution, what we really need to do is to work with them, for them to come up with a solution. (Interviewee)

A perspective from one interviewee distinguishes between a guidance counsellor and a career advisor when answering the question in relation to caring characteristics:

Guidance counsellor absolutely yes, as a career teacher or careers advisor you could probably get away without those qualities. (Interviewee)

Interviewees were then asked “what is your current role?” This question was noted to be difficult by some respondents. One interviewee described how his “answer is difficult” as he has “a huge amount of roles that I have in my job title”, and continued by listing several roles. One respondent noted a variation between his actual role and his job description:

I am described on the payroll as a jobs advocate but actually what I do is guidance counselling for unemployed adults, or under-employed adults. (Interviewee)

In contrast, one respondent is very specific in outlining her role in an adult education setting:

My current role is ‘guidance counsellor’. We have just under 1200 full-time day students. There is an element of career guidance. We go through the options available for the students after completion of their courses. We also provide personal counselling and I think of the two the personal counselling is about 60%. (Interviewee)

Other interviewees describe their role more concisely: “17 hrs of guidance”; “My current role is as bit of everything”; “I am co-ordinator of adult guidance”; and “I am currently home-school liaison co-ordinator”. Two of the twelve interviewees referred to themselves as ‘guidance counsellors’.

A further question was asked to in order to probe role identity: ‘Do you feel appropriately titled (term they used is repeated back in this question)?’ Again variation in comments emerged. For example, on one occasion when probed about the term
'guidance counsellor’ the interviewee stated that they did not feel appropriately titled, and in rationalising this he says,

I’m very much the careers advisor within the school and when it suits the school, the staff, the management, not the students but the staff and management, when it suits the school they then adopt the role of counsellor but the time allocation to do that is not forthcoming, so I would not see the title of my job description in what I do. (Interviewee)

Other answers offered varying perspectives of the terminology and the status given to the different terms used surrounding the role. “I think the ‘guidance’ should take priority over ‘guidance counselling’ role”. The reason given for this is “because in essence the counselling that is done in a school is at an initial stage”. One respondent describes how she calls herself “a career coach because of the training I give. You see, I have done very little counselling per se”. This respondent indicates that the counselling role is facilitated by the “school Chaplin” and “if there was a problem nobody ever came to me”. The complexity surrounding the title is highlighted in the following answer:

The name is interesting , like for the work that I am doing this morning I have called myself a career coach because I am helping people with their exit planning, that type of work I am doing with adults, but I generally like the word ‘careers’ in the work I do or ‘career guidance coach’ I sometimes use or ‘career coaching’. (Interviewee)

A lack of understanding by the wider community is described by some interviewees. One respondent indicates that he would call himself a “guidance counsellor” but his employers call him a “job advocate”. The reason for this discrepancy is noted: “Six years ago when I was being employed everybody wanted to be employing advocates”. The interviewee connects this on-trend rationale with a wider lack of understanding: “nobody really understood what it meant” but it’s a ‘redundant title’. The ‘misconception’ surrounding the role of the guidance counsellor is clearly outlined by the following interviewee’s comments. She describes how within her work setting she battles for clarity as a lot of her “own colleagues” refer to her as a career guidance and she very quick to say,

Well we’re not career guidance we are guidance counsellors. We do career guidance as part of this but our role really here is as guidance counsellors and that is slow to break down because people do have a misconception of it. (Interviewee)
The same respondent indicates that it is not just colleagues that have this misconception but parents also:

Even though we’re further education sector and the vast majority of our students are over the age of 18, a lot of their parents would still ring and say can you tell my son or my daughter what they should be doing, you know, so there is a general non-understanding of the role there (Interviewee)

This interviewee suggests that “it’s up to ourselves then to establish that role and to be quite strong in telling others what exactly we do”.

5.13.2 Balancing personal and social, educational and vocational development

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors describes how the guidance counsellor is professionally educated, at post-graduate level, to provide for the “personal and social, educational and vocational development of the young people”. This phrase was read out to the interviewee and the following question was asked: ‘Do you feel appropriately educated and professionally prepared in terms of knowledge/skills and attitudes to provide these areas of guidance counselling?’ Interviewees gave no definitive answer to this question. One respondent said “yes and no”, and he explained that his professional abilities come from developing skills through experience. In relation to the UL programme he states that

I think it touches on the fundamentals but it doesn’t deliver the full criteria you need to follow through on the whole social developmental side. Like you get told the bones of it so you know developmentally how someone goes through it. You have the counselling skills to help them through it but at the end of the day it is in the workplace that you develop the key skills needed. (Interviewee)

The importance of learning in the workplace is further explained as one respondent indicates that “essentially yes” she feels appropriately educated but not “just from having done the guidance counselling course”. She expands by stating,

I think a lot of it came on a need-to-know basis throughout my career. I believe that the course, while it’s an excellent course, prepares you as well as any other course would prepare you for the job but a lot of it is on the job learning. (Interviewee)

Providing career elements of the role is noted as an area of weakness by one interviewee: “I suppose at times for career options” sometimes “I can feel a little bit dodgy there”. This respondent describes what she would do in this case:
I will go away and do my research, I will ring up people and I’ve a good
network of friends that I would ring up and get advice. I’m improving every
day. (Interviewee)

Personal experience and colleagues are indicated as a source of help for one other
respondent:

I would think that the course prepared us for some of the areas but I think that
from my perspective… The course did give me a bit but as I said it wouldn’t
have given me all of the skills I needed I think. I drew on my own personal
skills, my life experience and my personal experience of having boys. I drew on
that and help from my colleagues. (Interviewee)

An additional comment emerging from this question related to the phrase used by IGC.
One interviewee indicated that the term “young people” didn’t reflect the work they did
and described the definition as “narrow”.

Following this question interviewees were probed as to which areas (personal/social,
educational and vocational) they felt the programme prepared them for. Interviewees
indicated that the programme prepared for personal counselling was “pretty strong” and
was “very well delivered”, more so than career guidance (“weak”). “It prepared me
personally; career as well to a lesser sense but the most would be personal counselling”.
Similarly, one respondent describes how “the personal definitely; it’s just we seemed to
do so much of it”. In relation to career counselling this interviewee says that

We did learn how to use the UCAS thing…… but at the same time the first
year or two when I had to do that it was panic stations but I suppose a lot of that
too was just having to apply it and learn how to use it yourself maybe.
(Interviewee)

A further interviewee states that

Personally it prepared me very well for the personal counselling and I felt that
over the two years we did a lot of personal counselling. We worked through it
and we learned I think, I personally learned, that it’s not about being the person
who knows it all, it’s really empowering the client. I think coming out of the
course I was quite well prepared for the personal counselling aspect of it.
(Interviewee)

In relation to career counselling this respondent explains how the course “gave us the
tools to go out and search it for ourselves”. To sum up her answer she highlights that
“personally I think it was an excellent course and I do feel that it prepared me, it
prepared me well for my role”. Some interviewees expressed more concern with the lack of career elements to the programme.

Well, study skills and exam techniques, nobody ever did anything like that with us, never at any point. Job search preparation/retention skills. Nobody ever did that with us. Nobody ever explained about FETAC and all those sort of things. (Interviewee)

This respondent describes how “even the essays we did were too much counselling-focused”. She continues to comment on the service she provides as she says,

There is a lot of counselling in a lot of schools, it’s growing daily. But, gosh, career guidance. What about the kids. I am finding it hard to get any career work done in (names school) because there is so much counselling. But I need to do career. (Interviewee)

Following this question interviewees were asked if the balance of the UL programme met the balance in reality. The majority of interviewees stated that it did not. For example, comments described an over-emphasis on counselling, which was not the case in reality: “It didn’t prepare me at all for the career counselling side of things”. The implications for this in practice are outlined:

For someone working in a secondary school the career counselling side would need more work. (Interviewee)

One respondent suggests that whoever inputs into the programmes design should reflect on the balance of the programme: “I suppose the IGC or whoever is organising the course in UL need to look at the percentage of guidance versus career information”. They indicate that the current balance is “80% counselling”. A minority of interviewees felt the course did reflect the balance in reality. One respondent describes how he liked the “particular stress on personal counselling” and he felt “the bit we did on career counselling was good”.

In order to determine if the UL programme can help graduates cope with balancing the three-dimensional (social/personal, educational and vocational) role I questioned if the course could help with developing management, self-care or collaboration skills. Interviewees did not overwhelmingly respond to listed topics but some indicated that more practical skills would be welcomed: “definitely a bit more practical”.

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5.13.3 The Impact of the programme on the graduate

Interviewees were asked about the impact of the programme on their lives professionally and personally. All of the responses discussed positive personal impacts. Some of the personal impacts described include:

The personal side has had a big impact because you have to do an awful amount of personal development and it made me question a lot of things career direction-wise. Just you have to look at yourself which is something you don’t typically get to do in many types of course. (Interviewee)

I suppose the whole counselling aspect of it has been really good and I am still doing the group counselling that we do a couple of times a year. I am still doing that. I was at it yesterday and I find it hugely beneficial as well. (Interviewee)

Some of the respondents indicate a significant personal impact:

It helped me to become a less intense person because I was very much an organiser and thought I could do it all, the reality is of course nobody can do it all, but I think the course allowed me to cut myself a little bit of slack and to accept help when it’s needed and also to know when to say ‘right I cannot do this’. (Interviewee)

One interviewee describes how the programme changed her: “Even my husband will say it has changed me but I think it’s a change in a good way”. She explains this change:

I’m better. I suppose before I would never have been good for standing up for something for myself and I suppose I’d be more inclined to do this now. It has made me more confident and I even find as my job is going on I’m getting better at it and improving at it. (Interviewee)

In terms of professional impact the interviewees describe the “huge benefit” of the programme. Comments such as “professionally it has just solidified what I want to do”, and it “professionally qualified me in something that I was always doing already – helping”. One respondent discusses how guidance counselling provision has restricted the professional skills he gained from the course:

Because of the way guidance is delivered in schools and the allocation of time being so vague I feel it is kind of unfortunate because I don’t feel I get to deliver on what I have been qualified to deliver, which is unfortunate. So of all I have learnt from UL, it’s a pity because the time you spend on the personal development of the student and the skills I would like to go more into, but I feel that I am constrained by time. (Interviewee)
5.13.4 *Overall Programme Evaluation*

Interviewees were asked to indicate if there is anything needed in the programme that is not there already. Some respondents indicated the need for more guidance with regard to school-based planning:

> I feel more of an input in relation to the ‘curricular development’ within the school in relation to guidance has to be something that should be emphasized more on the course. (Interviewee)

The importance of focusing on more serious teenage problems was indicated by some interviewees:

> Self-harm, suicide, serious issues, the problems we focused on were really more for the adult world, more focus on teenagers problems. 70/30 split. (Interviewee)

Linking counselling and careers guidance was suggested by one graduate: “Link the two areas a bit more and work on that”, because “really not an awful lot of what was done on it”. Preparing for the difficulties associated with managing the guidance counselling role is also highlighted as a need:

> I just feel that we are pulled in so many directions and there is no, there’s no account of what we do or no allocation of time put into it (role as a guidance counsellor) and the course did not prepare me for that at all. (Interviewee)

In fact, difficulties with time constraints and role management emerges at various points throughout the interviews. One respondent describes her role in a school with 460 pupils as “completely imbalanced” as she does not meet first to third years at all. Another interviewee describes his role in a school with “constant knocking at the door of students and staff, the constant phone ringing”. He explains the difficulty with “making time with myself to ground myself and make space in my day”. If he tries to take five minutes, “I will have five interruptions in doing so”.

In order to probe further into suggestions graduates may have with regard to improving the course, they were asked, “If you could give a piece of advice to the director of the programme about how to improve the programme, what would that be?” Some respondents indicated that more practical delivery was required:

> I think the key part is the practical delivery that has to happen in the workplace needs to be also looked at in the delivery of the course. So say for any course which is education-centred maybe having elements of the modules in the work
settings, adult, school, work and delivering. Having a link in college with what you have to do when you go out into the workplace. (Interviewee)

More focus on adult guidance is called upon by some interviewees but one respondent indicates that he is being “selfish” as this is the area he works in. One respondent indicates why focusing on adult guidance is so important in the current climate:

I would think that there is a big focus now on adult education and with the downturn there is a lot more adults looking for guidance, so definitely to include more on adult guidance (Interviewee)

Various other suggestions include having more contact using “email for advice”; “tightening up the summer school” as it is an “awful burden”; and “think about the workload that’s on offer”. Some interviewees highlighted that the workload did not “equate to a graduate diploma” and many felt they should have been awarded a masters level. However, a minority of respondents stated that “it was no masters”. One of these interviewees indicated that he had a masters completed and that the UL programme was “fairly awarded a graduate diploma”. In relation to a suggestion focusing on the outreach element one interviewee states that

If it’s going to be an outreach programme and run in a different facility they really, really need to do a lot more research into resources, how they’re going to get resources to people, about the facilitators. I mean using local facilitators would be way better than bringing people in. (Interviewee)

Another interviewee highlights the need for support during the programme:

I think they actually need, even though the course was for guidance counsellors, they need some sort of personal mentor as well. I know you had an FYP supervisor at the end but someone to mentor from the beginning. (Interviewee)

Finally, one interviewee suggests listening to the graduates:

Listen to the feedback and act on it. We are the people at the coalface, we have been through the programme, we have aired our grievances. (Interviewee)

Continuing professional development needs were also identified. Many respondents indicated a need for more skills to deal with practical counselling issues. This need emerged as the main area in which graduates expressed an interest in CPD. Interviewees’ comments included “refresher training on mental health issues would be good” and
I feel I need to upskill myself again now for the counselling side of it. You
know it’s definitely important and I don’t know if I am skilled enough for some
of the problems that kids are coming to me with. There is so much going on in
their lives now and just even down to specifics of when I should contact the
HSE. I need to brush up on that side of it. (Interviewee)

One interviewee highlights the need for continuing professional development in
multicultural guidance.

I think what we would really have to do more of now would be multicultural
aspects. (Interviewee)

The final question in the interview was ‘Would you recommend the programme?’.
The majority of graduates said they would “definitely” and have done “quite a number of
times”. The minority who said they wouldn’t recommend the programme gave the
following reasons:

One respondent indicated that he would recommend a full-time programme for
convenience. He states that

I don’t understand people who travel from Cork, travel up Tuesday night,
Friday night, Saturday morning for two years to do this course. (Interviewee)

Another interviewee compares the programme to a third-level programme she also
completed and she explains how she feels: “It wasn’t value for money”, and that “all
these courses are terribly expensive”. One outreach graduate states that she would
recommend it but “possibly not as outreach, I would recommend going to UL”.

Many interviewees stated that “absolutely yes” they would recommend the programme.
Interviewees suggested they would recommend the programme to people who are
“interested in guidance counselling and personal development” and people with “the
right motivation”.

5.14 Construct Map
In line with the constant comparative method used for analysis of data a construct map
(Fig. 5.12) was developed. The construct map also provides a visual summary of the
research findings presented in this chapter. This map illustrates how data between the
three phases (course directors’ narrative, questionnaires and interviews) compares
(second order constructs). Themes that emerged from each phase are captured and summarised in each section of the theoretical framework. This map also shows the interconnections between data gained through each of the phases and places this data within the input, process, output framework. Comparative constructs emerge from reviewing the map and identifying areas of convergence and divergence.
**Course Director Narrative**

- **Influence of IGC requirements.**
- Course director “Playing to Professional Strengths” Rogers described as influential.

**Questionnaires**

- Age profile balanced between 30-60. Majority female and teachers.
- Part-time and location factors significant “the energy and interest of the tutor determined the quality”.

**Interviews**

- Part-time, location and Employment. “Having more than one string to your bow”
- Interest in counselling
- Majority feel teaching experience is necessary.

**Input**

- Experiential methods highlighted as positive. Generally “very happy with the learning experience”.
- Off-campus resources needed
- Sensitivity of personal counselling

**Process**

- Heavier weight on personal counselling which required “real attendance” “is huge benefit to my role as a GC”.
- Frustrations included: Assumption that all participants were second level teachers & limited amount of exposure to adult guidance & lack of career focus
- Barriers to outreach learning: resources and communication
- Suggestion to blend theory and practice.

**Output**

- Vision for students “challenged in their thinking processes as well as in their interpersonal and intrapersonal domains of learning”.
- “A very positive experience”, “serves the mid-west well”, “should be a Masters”
- Graduates current roles are mainly in providing an information service but ideally want more counselling roles.
- 55.3% work as second level GCs and 15.3% work in adult guidance

**Comparative Themes Constructed**

**Convergence:**

- Course directors philosophy, the learning content and methods and the personal impact of the programme on graduates.

**Divergence:**

- Underlying values of graduates and actual roles due to provision issues.
- The positive input and output of the counselling focus and the expressed sensitively when reflecting on the counselling process.
5.15 Conclusion
This chapter presented my findings. The data has been analysed using a number of systematic procedures. These have ensured I have not become overwhelmed by the amount of data. I have clearly presented the findings in line with the model for the evaluation. Doing this ensures findings are selected based on relevance to the central research questions. The construct map identified above highlights the main themes emerging from the study. From the data it emerges that

- Aside from the initial requirements set down by the IGC, the course director does significantly influence the input, process and output factors of the UL programme. Convergence can be identified between the course director’s philosophy, the learning content and methods and the expressed personal impact of the programme on graduates.

- In the questionnaire phase the main reasons for being attracted to the programme emerged as its part-time and location features. These reasons were solidified in the interview phase and an addition reason was highlighted as many interviewees discussed the importance of employability within the school context.

- Significantly disjointed discourse was presented when graduates were asked questions surrounding their roles and title. Some found it difficult to clearly answer questions in relation to their roles. Those who could answer the questions had mixed views.

- Divergence can be identified when observing the underlying values of graduates when asked ‘What does it mean to be a success as a guidance counsellor?’ and actual roles due to expressed time constraints and provision issues. In addition, some graduates vision of ‘success’ did not reflect the counselling focus of the programme.

- The counselling focus is reflected positively as input and output factors; however, an expressed sensitivity was indicated by some when reflecting on the counselling process. It was recommended that the appropriate facilitator, smaller group sizes and more debriefing would improve this process.
Some graduates were not satisfied with the level of qualification they received on completion of the programme. They felt it should be awarded a masters level qualification.

In summation, good practice by the UL GDGC education programme can be observed in that the course closely reflects IGC policy requirements in relation to guidance counsellor education. It provides an opportunity, mainly for teachers, to become more employable, while continuing full-time work, at locations which are accessible. The learning process and output of the programme are in alignment with the ‘primacy afforded’ to the personal counselling focus. The course director’s wish for graduates to embody the lifelong learning concept is reflected in interviewees recognition that “education does not stop at course level”. The experience of the learning process was reflected upon favourably (‘a milestone’) in terms of the counselling content, the experiential learning methods and the assessment for learning approach. Graduates expressed overall satisfaction with the professional impact of the programme and extremely significant personal impacts emerged.

Areas for improvement were also highlighted. Some graduates expressed dissatisfaction with the balance of the programme. They felt more careers was needed as this is what they do day-to-day. Questionnaire findings indicate that information processing is in fact the main role undertaken by graduates. A stronger focus on adult guidance was called for and also a more blended approach to career/counselling and theory/practice. The learning process for outreach students was indicated to be inhibited by a lack of access to resources.

Continuing professional development needs were expressed in the areas of multicultural guidance, curriculum planning and counselling skills to deal with mental health issues for adolescents.

A number of key issues have presented themselves in this chapter. These findings are discussed in depth and are explored alongside current literature in the next chapter.
6.0 Introduction

In this chapter the main findings of the study are discussed considering current literature. The key findings reflect the central research questions which were outlined at the outset of this study. These questions were developed using the input-process-output model for evaluating the UL GDGC and were devised considering both the aim and objectives of the research and the rationale for undertaking the study. The central research questions provide the framework for the analysis and discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter.

The structure for this chapter begins by discussing the contextual and participant input factors of the programme; the following section explores the learning process and the professional and personal impact of the programme. As this chapter aims to synthesise and interpret the study in its entirety the findings are not strictly presented under input, process and output themes; they will be discussed across the whole evaluation framework in order to explore the comparative constructs in depth. The 3P model (Biggs, 1999) describes teaching as a balanced system in which all components support each other. By discussing the findings alongside the theoretical components of the evaluation model applied to this study it will be asserted if the principal of constructive alignment is reflected in the UL course. “Non-alignment is signified by inconsistencies, unmet expectations and practices that contradict what we preach” (Biggs, 1999: 25). Throughout this chapter I will compare data collected from this study with other research findings and developing theory in order to determine the extent to which findings dispute or concur with other studies.

6.1 Input factors

Biggs (2001) describes student factors and teaching context as essential presage factors to consider when evaluating an education programme. Findings in relation to specific input factors and the relationship they have with the current course content and methodology are discussed in this section.
6.1.1 The Complexity of Implementing a Guidance Counsellor Education Programme

Findings surrounding the procedures and personnel involved in creating the teaching context of the UL guidance counsellor education programme emerged from the course director’s personal narrative, from a literature review of the documented aims of the UL programme and the national professional body policy provision (IGC). The evolution of the UL programme was tracked earlier in this thesis in order to establish the context from which the current input factors have developed. It was established in the literature review that “extreme variation” exists in terms of guidance counsellor education programmes (Van Esbroeck, 2000: 1). The complexity of implementing a guidance counsellor programme (Geary and Liston, 2009) is evident when reflecting on the extensive literature surrounding the expected competencies of guidance counsellors. It emerged from the findings of this study that the context, inputs, processes and outputs of the UL programme are deeply embedded in the course director’s personal narrative. The direct relationship the course director has with the current course content and methodology are noted when he states that,

Elements of the programme which were very strong from the beginning were the counselling theory and skills, the experiential group process, which closely reflected the strengths of myself. (Course director)

Furthermore, in the comparative construct map presented in the previous chapter, evidence of convergence between the course director’s philosophy, the learning content and methods, and the personal impact of the programme on graduates emerged. It is also asserted from the findings and literature review that the IGC set down the requirements and the course director influences the development of the UL programme. Based on the findings, the course director’s educational strengths and personal philosophies, “playing to my personal and my broader educational strengths”, alongside the Institute of Guidance Counsellors’ requirements can be said to make up the teaching content of the UL programme. McCarthy (2001) described how in Ireland the Course Directors & the Professional Association for Guidance Counsellors (IGC) influence guidance counsellor education programmes. It has been determined that this is somewhat true for the UL programme as the course director documents this throughout the narrative. The standards set by the National Professional Body (IGC) have mainly influenced the UL course, confirming McCarthy’s (2001) comments regarding who influences guidance
counsellor education programmes. It was observed in the literature review how the course content reflects the areas prescribed by the IGC. However, what has also emerged is that in Ireland course directors collaborate in order to strengthen components of the initial guidance counsellor education programmes. This signifies further input by course directors as they generate a sense of cohesion and advance the professional issues of a guidance counsellor education programme. In Ireland, course directors and representatives of initial training programmes meet and discuss the course recognition framework. Areas such as, Theory and Practice of Psychological Assessment, Counselling Competencies and Practice Placements have been advanced as a result. The NCGE convene this committee of directors and representatives to meet four times a year. It states on the NCGE website that,

Arising out of this consultative process, the guidance course directors have reached agreement on a course recognition framework for the initial training of guidance counsellors. This recognition framework enables the Department of Education and Science and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors to ensure that guidance counsellors employed in education settings are appropriately qualified and have the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to work with young people and adults.

Additional terms of reference discussed by this consultative group include:

- examining existing provision of initial and in-service training for guidance counsellors and considering development of induction programmes for recently trained guidance counsellors;
- examining developments in adult education and considering the interconnection between school and adult guidance in the context of lifelong learning;
- making proposals to the Department of Education and Science, its agencies and other relevant parties, arising from the above (NCGE, undated).

With research findings and literature validating the fact that the course director has a significant influence on the teaching and learning surrounding the programme content set out by the IGC, it is necessary to explore the findings surrounding the course directors’ narratives further.

When comparing the two course directors’ personal narratives one observes convergence as both recognise that the influence of undertaking work at a national level in the area of guidance and counselling leads to a clear translation of national guidance and counselling documents into the course content of their respective programmes. The
translation of international policy documents, however, is less evident in the UL course director’s narrative. Throughout the research findings no significant international influences or inputs can be observed. This finding is reflective of comments regarding international variation in guidance counselling education programmes and the variation in who decides on the programme, as described by Sultana (2009). The variation among specific countries is outlined in the literature review. Sultana (2009) described the necessity for clearer international competency frameworks in order to deal with practitioner role variation but he also recognises the necessity for bottom-up identification of evolving competence requirements. The findings from this study show how a combination of bottom-up (course director) and top-down (IGC requirements) approaches to the design of the UL programme are evident. Sultana (2009) indicates that there are strengths and weaknesses of top-down and bottom-up approaches when devising counsellor education programmes. When looking at broader curriculum planning literature McCormack (2010: 127) describes how “a centralist model of curriculum development is the most prominent in Ireland”. She discusses how this is problematic as the distance between top-down developments and the teachers who are expected to implement these developments is too great. When applying this concept to the UL programme, good practice is evident as course directors are collaborating (NCGE consultative group) regarding course developments however good practice would be strengthened further by collaboration between the course directors and the IGC regarding the requirements set out by the IGC. McCormack (2010) indicates that the adoption of an inclusive approach to curriculum development ensures an effective and sustainable approach. Evidence suggests the top-down approach of the IGC is currently effective as the course director explains how he feels “reaffirmed by the IGC requirements”. This is an important expression, as the importance of feeling supported by requirements rather than merely meeting requirements is discussed by Biggs (1999: 14):

The surface approach arises from an intention to get the task out of the way with minimum trouble, while appearing to meet requirements. Low cognitive level activities are used, when higher-level activities are required to do the task properly.

Therefore a deep approach to learning is more likely to relate to the UL programme. “The deep approach arises from a felt need to engage the task appropriately and meaningfully” (Biggs: 1999). If course directors felt needs are being met by an inclusive
approach to devising guidance counsellor education programmes then they must also be particularly aware of the remaining expressed, comparative and normative needs. Bradshaw’s (1972) concept of assessing needs (cited in Naidoo and Willis, 1994) demonstrates the complexity of understanding which the course director and course team must apply when deciding what is needed within the UL programme. Bradshaw distinguishes four types of need – normative, felt, expressed and comparative – which should be considered when assessing. Comparative needs are defined as,

A person or group is said to be in need if their situation, when compared with that of a similar group or individual is found ‘wanting’ or lacking with regard to services and resources. (1994: 206)

The comparative needs of graduates are considered in a number of ways for this thesis. On-campus and off-campus graduates’ needs are viewed and research studies providing insights into other guidance counselling education programmes are also explored. Normative needs are objective needs as defined by professionals. For example, in relation to guidance counsellor training the following normative need has been documented:

There is a need to seek evidence on what levels and forms of training are effective in developing career guidance practice which is able to deliver the client outcomes needed to achieve desired policy outcomes in each country and to meet EU goals (Cedefop, 2009: 93).

Bradshaw discusses how the felt needs of graduates should not be considered in isolation as they may be limited due to a lack of knowledge: “Someone may not believe themselves to be in need simply because they do not know what is available in terms of treatments or services” (Naidoo and Willis, 1994: 205). Furthermore, considering expressed needs in isolation is problematic as “some needs are not expressed, perhaps because of an inability or unwillingness to articulate the need” (1994: 206). This study evaluates the UL programme in a way that presents students felt, “Felt needs are what people really want” (1994: 205), and expressed needs objectively in order to determine comparative needs and add to discourse on normative needs.

The course director is not the bottom line of guidance counselling service provision. The graduate from the guidance counsellor education programme and the client receiving the service are the closest stakeholders in the guidance counselling process; therefore the course director must also consider the needs of these parties. The ability of
the course director to be critically reflexive is a central factor in creating relevant course input factors. Johns (2003) describes how,

Self-monitoring of needs and motivations must be a key element in any trainer’s personal work: noticing how the balance of needs changes over time; weighing altruism with selfishness, public image with private tasks. (2003: 73)

The UL course director does state his awareness of his influence when he includes in his narrative that

The professional development of Course Directors has a very strong influence on the type of programmes which they develop, lead and teach on. (Course director A)

Considering the benefits and drawbacks of top-down and bottom-up approaches, in effect shows how the implementation of a guidance counsellor education programme is a complex task.

The complexity of the personal narrative of the course director’s own experience and education mixed with the difficulty of trying to be inclusive to National policies, professional body frameworks and institutional policy is substantial. This is an ongoing issue which course leaders need to address through awareness, membership of professional guidance and counselling forums and continuing professional development (Geary and Liston, 2009: 10)

The critical reflexivity of the course director is central to a guidance counsellor education programme. Johns (2003: 73) states that,

All trainers must take responsibility for finding supports and resources outside themselves to help replenish what training (and life – both demanding activities!) drain away.

Examples of these supports and resources are listed by Johns (2003: 73) as “supervision, personal counselling, peer support, close colleagues, old friends (especially those who are also trainers)”. She also notes how “my partner and family, animals, music, books and nature, food and drink, all in their different ways at different times are crucial for me”. Considering Elmore’s concept of backward mapping, which was discussed in the literature review, “the closer one is to the source of the problem the greater one’s ability to influence it”. Sultana’s comments on guidance counsellor education, broader curriculum planning theory, Biggs theory on surface and deep approaches to learning, Bradshaw’s needs and the results from this research it may be deducted that an informed and critically reflexive course director, supportive national professional body and
government lead to the correct environment in which to devise a successful education programme for guidance counsellors. With the recent recognition by Repetto (2008) of the need for change in relation to guidance counsellor education programmes, the elements of good practice highlighted in the above section are worth considering before any change or reform to initial guidance counsellor education takes effect.

6.1.2 Student Factors

This discussion section explores the student input factors and in particular focuses on the findings which outline the reasons why participants chose to undertake a guidance counsellor education programme. An important input factor into any learning programme is the participant’s reason for attending the programme. Why you choose to participate in an education programme can greatly affect the learning that occurs. Biggs (1999:15) describes factors that encourage a surface approach by students towards learning:

- An intention only to achieve a minimal pass; such may arise from a ‘meal ticket’ view of university, or from a requirement to take a subject irrelevant to the student’s programme;
- Non-academic priorities exceeding academic ones;
- Insufficient time, too high a workload;
- Misunderstanding requirements, such as thinking that factual recall is adequate;
- A cynical view of education;
- High anxiety;
- A genuine inability to understand particular content at a deep level.

If you consider the literature above to determine if students’ input factors are creating the opportunity for surface learning experiences the following is found: Some questionnaire respondents and interviewees did express that the workload was “heavy” and one respondent noted how, on reflection, he wished he had put more time aside for the programme. A second factor which can be related to interview findings emerged from interviewees indicating that they wanted the qualification in order to have “more strings to their bow” and to increase their chances of employability. However, this
factor was never mentioned in isolation, therefore it cannot be deducted that graduates’ “only” intention was to pass the course in order to gain a “meal ticket”. On the other hand, factors that encourage students to adopt a depth approach to learning include,

- An intention to engage the task meaningfully and appropriately; such an intention may arise from an intrinsic curiosity or from a determination to do well;
- Appropriate background knowledge: the ability to focus at a high conceptual level, working from first principles, requires a well-structured knowledge base;
- A genuine preference, and ability, for working conceptually rather than with unrelated detail (Biggs, 1999: 17).

If you consider the literature above to determine if students’ input factors are creating the opportunity for deep learning experiences the following is found: Some respondents recognised the need for a professional approach to serious issues and some indicated that they had a previous knowledge base or experience in the area. As all participants had degree qualifications undertaking the programme the ability to focus at a high conceptual level can be asserted. Some respondents highlighted that the learning focus of the programme attracted them; for example, the use of formative assessment rather than summative and the focus on personal counselling were selected. Therefore, all three factors which encourage a deep approach to learning are observed in the research findings, whereas two of seven factors which encourage a surface approach to learning are observed in the findings. One can conclude that, from applying Biggs’ theories on surface and deep approaches to learning, for the most part UL participants are attracted to the programme due to reasons which encourage a deep approach to learning.

Findings surrounding the demography of graduates indicate that there are three times more females (73%) than males. This imbalance is recognised in the (2006) DES ‘Inspectorate Review of Guidance in Second-level Schools’: “Guidance is increasingly becoming a feminised profession (two-thirds are female)” (2006: 132). With the teaching profession predominately female, and with the UL programme comprising mainly (82.4%) of teachers, it is not surprising that this imbalance emerged. It may be the case that this imbalance will reduce in the coming years as fewer options in male-dominated industries (construction, engineering, finance) are available. The need for more male role models in education settings has been well documented, but does this
discourse need to include the need for more male guidance counsellors? McCormack (2010: 113) explores the reluctance amongst some male teachers to become involved in affective domains of education. She discusses the importance of male involvement and cites Gilbert and Gilbert (1998: 240) to stress the significance:

The lack of male teachers’ involvement [may be] seen as a sign that the programme is irrelevant to male concerns.

The findings from this study converge with suggestions that the guidance counselling community is mainly female. The affect of a lack of male input on broader educational concepts such as affective education have been documented however the guidance counselling community need to develop a specific discourse surrounding male involvement in order to ensure male concerns are being met by the guidance counselling service. Firstly it is necessary to explore the extent to which, if at all, the gender of the guidance counsellor affects the clients (male or female) guidance counselling process. International literature surrounding this area includes the work of Bailey (1993).

While the age bracket of graduates in this study was found to be ‘well distributed between the ages of 30 and 60’, ‘only 2.4% (n=2) are in the 26 to 30 age bracket’. By applying the same concept as Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) one could rephrase their suggestion to read: “The lack of ‘younger generation input’ may be seen as a sign that the programme (guidance counselling service) is irrelevant to ‘younger generation concerns’”. Could a younger generation of guidance counsellors be better placed to deal with concerns regarding drug and alcohol use and mental health issues? The NCCA (2008: 8) describe the current situation in Ireland:

Antisocial behaviour and increases in crime are reported regularly in national media. There is also a sense of cultural approbation about perceived leisure/life styles among young people in relation to consumption of alcohol, drug use and sexual activity.

The NCCA recognise a wide divergence between perceptions of young peoples’ lives and young peoples’ actual activities. Many guidance counsellor education and training programmes have an age requirement of over 23; however, under 23s can undertake education degrees and are expected to undertake roles in affective education from the outset. Rogers (1967: 56) states that,

The optimal helping relationship is the kind of relationship created by a person who is psychologically mature.
Psychological maturity is not indicated by Rogers to be based on age requirements but rather the degree to which a person can create relationships which facilitate “the growth of others as separate persons”, as it is a measure of the growth they have achieved themselves. Rogers also indicates that this is a lifetime task. Interviewees indicate that undertaking the programme at a particular time in your life is significant. One interviewee described how she was glad she waited to do the programme at a mature age as she would not have been ready for it in earlier life. Another interviewee indicated that he wishes he did it sooner in life. Having discussed the advantages and disadvantages of age profile it could be concluded that course directors, policymakers and possibly principals should reflect on the ability of a younger generation of guidance counsellors to reach out to young people’s needs. However, before this can be done objectively, specific research on this theoretical perspective is required. A concept which has been well represented in literature (Rogers, 1967; Mearns and Cooper, 2005) is the necessity or ‘readiness’ of the prospective guidance counsellor student. The ability of the prospective student to encompass ‘psychological maturity’ needs to prioritised ahead of all requirements.

Findings surrounding the reasons graduates decided to undertake the UL programme indicate that, firstly, the context in which the programme is offered, and the programme being provided at accessible locations and as a part-time learning programme are most significant. Discussion surrounding the positives and negatives of part-time learning in guidance counsellor education exists. Mearns discusses the day model (equivalent of one day a week), a full-time model and block release models of guidance counselling. He discusses how person-centred counselling training is “not simply a matter of ‘learning how to do it’ but requires considerable attention to personal development” (1998: xi). The day model is said to provide more reflective time between classes in order to enhance personal development and the model allows “the course member continually to come back and forward from his or her work existence”, thereby interrelating the two. Mearns describes a disadvantage of this structure as the “relative loss of intensity” making it difficult to sustain momentum. The full-time model has a central advantage due to the intensity it creates; however, the accessibility of the learning programme for people in full-time employment is restricted. Graduates of the UL programme document the benefits of being able to work full-time and undertake the course. The block release model discussed by Mearns reflects aspects of the UL
programme as residential weekends and summer schools are elements of the course. These elements provide the opportunity for learning intensity to increase. Therefore, the UL programme can be described as reflecting a programme which combines the best levels of accessibility and opportunity for intense learning:

This design offers a productive combination of intensity and length which has the additional benefit of being more accessible to those in full-time employment (1998: xiii).

When graduates of the UL programme are asked about their experience of the part-time aspect of the programme many comment positively on the accessibility, convenience and financial benefits but none directly discuss the learning intensity implications of the part-time model.

Employability was highlighted repeatedly during the interviews as a reason for undertaking the programme. As indicated previously in this chapter, undertaking a learning programme in order to gain a “meal ticket” (Biggs, 1999) leads to surface learning in most cases. However, it was asserted that employability was never mentioned in isolation, therefore the reason for graduates expressing ‘employability’ as a reason for undertaking the course requires more consideration. Employability was mainly discussed in the context of the secondary school system. When educational literature surrounding teachers’ professional lives is reviewed it is suggested that ‘vulnerability’ is a central feature of the current teaching community.

Never before have teachers been so vulnerable and so important at the same time. Never before have the boundaries between the school and its environment become so permeable and transparent (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998: xii).

In the literature review the work of Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) on the professional development of teachers is explored. It is noted that three dimensions of teachers’ professional lives, namely, the “personal, professional, and political dimensions of teachers” exist (1996: 24). When the findings from this study are compared to the three dimensions of teachers’ professional lives one can observe that a small number indicate personal reasons, to a large extent professional reasons are noted, and a small number of graduates describe how the school principal influenced their decision to take part in the programme. Pauline Finucane (2004) discusses how CPD programmes such as the UL GDGC offer teachers many rewards, in terms of their teaching and their learning; however, the “true meaning of CPD and its ‘holistic definition’” has been somewhat
lost. Considering this we can compare the input breakdown to the expressed outcomes of graduates and observe a significant increase in the number of graduates indicating personal gains. This suggests that on completion of the programme the “true meaning of CPD” is recognised as the personal domain is embodied. As one questionnaire respondent puts it, “It is an excellent programme to someone who still believes that the true study of man is mankind”. Therefore, while at times external reasons are indicated for doing the programme, during the process of learning this motivation changes towards an internal motivation, suggesting a deep approach to learning so that the expressed outcome of significant personal development emerges. Findings in relation to the debate surrounding the background of guidance counsellors did surface and the majority of interviewees expressed that they felt teaching experience is necessary in order to be a successful guidance counsellor. However, on reflection, this is not a significant point which can be added ethically to any side of the debate as the majority of interviewees were from a teaching background.

In summarising the discussion surrounding input factors it can be said that the UL course design is reflective of national policy requirements and conducive to a deep approach to learning due to the collaboration between course directors. However, international policy, which includes recent global developments and changes in areas such as multicultural guidance, adult guidance and societal guidance, requires attention in order to further enhance the UL programme. As indicated in the context chapter, developments in guidance counselling are well represented in national and international policy documents but ensuring these policies come to play has been problematic in the past. Guidance counsellor education course directors and teaching teams must continually reflect on policy to ensure that they are informing and enabling guidance practitioners to comprehend and subsequently provide a service which reflects recent policy development.

At first glance student input factors seem to be appropriate to the deep approach to learning; however, with ‘increasing employability’ emerging as a significant factor attracting teachers to the programme and considering Pauline Finucane’s literature surrounding the ‘true meaning of CPD’, a surface approach to learning may be employed at the outset by students. In the next section this concept will be explored further as the teaching and learning process, alongside the outputs, will be discussed.
6.2 **Process and Output Factors**

Process factors listed by Biggs (2001) are the focus for the following section. This element of the study explores the learning-focused activities and ongoing approaches to learning which take place as part of the programme. It is important that the relationship between process and outcomes (Borgen et al, 2009) is considered in this section. Borgen et al (2009) list learning outcomes, personal outcomes and impact outcomes as indicators of ‘client’, or in this case ‘graduate’, change. The output elements of this evaluation determine the career paths of the graduates of the programme. Both personal learning outcomes and competency-based learning outcomes are ascertained, along with the CPD needs of graduates.

Significant findings emerged, mainly surrounding the focus on personal development and counselling. It emerged from the construct map that convergence between the course director’s philosophy, the learning content and methods, and the personal impact of the programme on graduates could be observed. Therefore, one could deduct that by focusing on the depth of personal counselling rather than covering all aspects of the guidance counselling role equally the course is devised in a way that is “emphasising depth of learning rather than breadth of coverage” (Biggs 1999: 17). However, expressions of a lack of career knowledge, sensitivity to the counselling areas and holding back from the learning process were indicated by some graduates. These comments, while in the minority, are important to explore as they indicate a gap in the learning process. Biggs describes how,

> In order to improve learning the positive and/or negative factors which exist during the learning process must be identified (1999: 17).

Positive aspects of the UL programme which were expressed by graduates related to the personal development, counselling focus of the programme and the experiential teaching methodologies used.

### 6.2.1 The Learning Focus

In this section findings surrounding the counselling focus are engaged with the literature to determine the extent to which the counselling focus of the UL programme is reflective of policy and to establish the grounding points for further illumination on the
learning processes associated with the UL programme. It has been established in the literature review that the focus of the guidance counselling programme and guidance counselling service is an ongoing debate. Findings from this study add to the discourse surrounding the focus of guidance counselling education programmes. The psychological aspects of guidance counselling and focus on the personal counselling dimension are emphasised throughout the UL course. Psychology, sociology and economics are all connected with guidance counselling programmes and practice. These various theoretical orientations are extensively reviewed in the literature chapter. A concluding point to a review of this literature describes an observed link between theoretical orientations and wider societal, economic and education values. The extent to which theoretical orientation underpins a guidance counselling education programme is debated in literature widely. In the UK context Watts & Law (1996) describe how trends in the past have seen many changes in the focus of guidance counselling.

Indeed as a crude generalisation, it could be argued that whereas in the 1940’s and 1950’s the careers field was dominated by psychology, in the 1960’s and 1970’s this dominance was challenged in the UK by sociology, and in the 1980’s and 1990’s by economics (1996: 1).

Guidance counselling education programmes can be categorised into those with psychological, sociological, socio-economic or having a combined emphasis and comments from the questionnaire such as “The course places a heavy emphasis on counselling” strongly confirm the presence of the personal focus in the UL programme. The importance of bottom-up approaches to guidance counselling programmes has also been recognised. Chamberlain and Delaney (1977: 51) state that,

Although broad parameters were derived from theoretical models developed in the United States and Europe, it is felt that the form taken by school guidance in Ireland should meet the distinctive educational and cultural needs of Irish society.

The Irish guidance counselling service is among a minority of European countries which has a personal counselling emphasis. From observing findings from this study it can be concluded that the UL programme converges with the personal counselling emphasis of the Irish service, therefore supporting a bottom-up approach to the guidance counselling needs of Irish society. The breakdown of what areas guidance covers in a number of European countries is analysed in an ERSI report ‘Guidance for all?’. From the breakdown one can see that the emphasis in Europe is on the vocational
and educational guidance of students, with few countries providing personal guidance. Ireland, however, is among the few countries that does support personal guidance. The ERSI report describes how,

International work (OECD, CEDEFOP and World Bank reports) has tended to focus attention on the nature of career guidance services operating in schools, giving considerably less attention to the more ‘personal counselling’ dimension of the role which has traditionally been a feature of Guidance Counselling services in Irish schools (2006: 13).

Considering international frameworks suggests a need to improve the UL course in order to facilitate career education more effectively. Consequently it may be the case that the course director and course team would reconsider the amount of time spent on the counselling aspect of the course in order to meet the career focus of the international guidance counselling policy. However, this is a consideration which needs to be looked at carefully as qualitative comments from graduates highlight the importance of personal counselling. Furthermore, it was established in the literature review that the importance of personal counselling affirms its central position within guidance counsellor education programmes (Johns), (Mearns).

An open-ended question ‘please comment on your experience of the UL programme’ was included at the end of the questionnaire. In the methodology chapter I acknowledged Cohen and Manion’s (2000) rationale for including such a question, as they describe how open-ended questions like this can sometimes lead to finding a ‘gem’ of data. This happened! 50% of respondents commented on the balance of the course contents between educational, vocational/career and personal/social guidance counselling without any direct prompt. The breakdown of these comments included a mix of satisfaction and dissatisfaction; however, the majority of comments suggested a positive focus on the counselling aspect of guidance counselling. On one hand graduates feel the programme is very well balanced and on the other a lack of careers information is identified. While some graduates recognise a need for more careers information they also recognise that they can access the information easily. When this concept was explored further in interviews, insights were gained into why graduates were so expressive on the topic surrounding the balance of the programme. During the interviews the difficulty of balancing the three-dimensional role in reality was discussed. The main difficulty experienced by graduates was in terms of lack of time in order to do the roles required as “guidance counsellors don’t have time”. The person-
centered counselling focus is noted as “something that is given preference” by one interviewee. He then states that “it is less useful in school settings due to time constraints”. McGuinness describes the maintenance and growth of the teacher as a counsellor. He explains how focusing on the well-being of pupils should come with the same attention as the well-being of teachers. He indicates the importance of personal development as he states, “Wounded carers work with diminished effect” (1998: 108). He continues by discussing how the increasing teaching and counselling demands placed on teachers is causing stress. This stress is described as occurring,

> When the demands made of us exceed the resources we have to meet those demands, and is often accompanied by our having no control over the amount of material that is pouring in on us (1998: 110).

McGuinness relates the employing organisation to the increasing workload. McCarthy’s (2001) literature, which was reviewed earlier in this study, suggested that the priorities that guidance counsellors “attach to their work tasks appear more a function of the particular type of training they have undertaken”. Considering the findings from this study this concept does not necessarily apply to UL graduates as in reality they are not providing counselling to the extent to which they would like; instead they are providing information mainly in their current role. Graduates express a desire for an evenly-balanced role between all the dimensions, outlined by the IGC and NCGE, in reality. Overall, the counselling aspect is looked upon favourably by graduates and national policy documents (IGC, NCGE); however, with theoretical concepts of a constructivist nature emerging and international policy favouring career education, perhaps graduates’ suggestions with regard to a more blended approach require consideration in terms of balancing career and guidance roles.

### 6.2.2 Balancing the guidance counsellor education programme

When analysing the output factors of the UL GDGC it is established that the programme views the clients graduates will deal with as clients with both personal and career needs. The UL graduate gains competencies to provide for counselling to a high standard and provide for careers information when required.

> It was a very difficult programme, but in terms of personal and professional development it enabled me to feel confident in my role as a Guidance
Counsellor. I felt competent in my dual role of both career advisor and counsellor (Questionnaire respondent).

Recently it has also been argued that it is impossible to separate so distinctly career and personal guidance. Porfeli et al (2005) describe Super (1984), Krumboltz (1994) and Holland’s (1997) theories of career development and by doing so they note how it is both the person and the context as well as the process and content orientations collectively that provide the most complete picture of career development. The guidance and counselling system in Irish secondary schools has recognised this climate, as guidance counsellors integrate personal counselling and career counselling into the service they provide pupils. A study by the Department of Education and Science (as it was known as at the time), cited in Shiel and Lewis (1992), shows the involvement of personal counselling in Irish secondary schools:

The 1985 survey of the School Guidance Committee ranked individual personal counselling as the activity in which they engaged most frequently at Junior-Cycle level (1992: 11).

In setting the context for the research it was recognised that the strength of the personal dimension in guidance counselling in Ireland had similarities with America. In the British context McGuiness describes how in 1979 “the personal development of children” was documented as ‘the central purpose of education”’ (1998: 8). This suggests that personal counselling was held in high esteem in the education system in Britain. However, as we read on McGuiness describes a country which evolved with more of a focus on “testing, vocationalism, central control and, of course, the market place” (1998: 8). Economic commentators feel this may be the way forward and countries such as Norway and Poland have also recognised this view by separating out a distinct career guidance role. In the ERSI report it states,

Within such ‘holistic’ systems like Ireland, economic commentators warn that there is a danger that career and educational guidance in schools can be marginalised within the broad concept of guidance (McCoy et al, 2006: 15).

They maintain that counsellors spend much of their time dealing with pupils’ personal problems and are possibly falling short of helping pupils with educational, vocational choices and long-term career planning. UL graduates express contrasting views as they indicate that in their ideal role they would be spending less time on information
processing and more on counselling. It has been argued that complying with economic views would in turn lead to a situation where,

Pupils and students are viewed more as future contributors to the national economy, valuable for that potential contribution, rather than as intrinsically valuable for their humanity (McGuiness, 1998: 9).

The UL GDGC prioritises the personal counselling focus while considering the need for career guidance in some instances. However, it can be said that this philosophical stance does not reflect in the ‘worldview’ of all graduates of the programme. Some graduates’ worldviews can be described as supporting economic perspectives. Comments from graduates regarding ‘what it means to them to be a success as a guidance counsellor’ show that some guidance counsellors value their success based on matching the student with high academic potential with a career. One respondent describes how even though they know they should be providing an equal service to all it is difficult, as the tendency is to think,

Let’s not give Johnny here time because Johnny is going to end up, you know, in the local whatever (Interviewee).

This philosophy reflects the wider education concern which Trant (cited in Gleeson, 2009) states is “the story we tell our children about the good life”. It has been noted that the Irish education system can tend to lean towards an over-emphasis on the points-based college entry system. The impact of the Irish examination culture – ‘the points race’ – is described by Tolley.

The divorce between the objectives of education, as shared by so many teachers and parents and the reality of the system as it is bent to satisfy the needs of examinations has been commented upon so much that one must assume that there is no will to insist upon the primacy of educational objectives over the secondary, distorting values of examinations as currently operated (1989: 254).

The message students are sometimes receiving is that the higher the points, the better job prospects, financial gain, and therefore the more happiness you will have. While the points system is still in existence this philosophy of happiness has been widely disregarded. McGuinness (1998) emphasises how the development of teachers’ pastoral care increases the chances of creating an ethical teaching environment. Teachers must, he says,
Create a climate of trust in their schools and classrooms, encourage students to participate in decision-making, enhance the self-esteem of pupils, create excitement in intellectual and emotional discovery, establish an attitude that learning is a lifelong affair, use research findings to infuse their teaching, grow personally and help students to realise that ‘the good life’ lies within each of us, not outside of us (1998: 17).

Why then do some graduates of the UL programme make comments which reflect such an economic worldview? Is the current economic downturn contributing to the centrally of an economic worldview? In order to investigate these queries findings surrounding the expressed sensitivity to the learning process are explored. The expressed sensitivity may create a barrier to the learning process and effectively be a contributing factor to graduates’ economic worldview.

6.2.3 Expressed sensitivity to personal growth

In the UL postgraduate prospectus it describes how the programme provides the opportunity for teachers to deal with individual growth:

While the programme will familiarise students with the relevant knowledge base and provide them with the required competencies, it will also focus on self-understanding and personal development (UL, 2008).

Some graduates from the UL indicated that they did not fully engage with the personal development due to feelings of discomfort, or “hurt feelings”. Rogers (1961) explains that personal growth can be a frightening search. Graduates who associate personal development with feelings of hurt may be deterred from the process altogether, including in their own practice, therefore possibly creating a stronger focus on career guidance. Many graduates expressed how they overcame the difficulties associated with personal growth and gained a lot from the learning process, referring to the process as a ‘milestone’. Others reflect on the process regretfully:

I sort of copped out of it, in that I didn’t really immerse myself fully in it. I went through the existential exercises but I held back quite a bit of myself and sometimes I think it was a missed opportunity (Interviewee).

A suggestion by some graduates was that a smaller group size would create an environment which was more suitable in the context of the learning process. Furthermore, the importance of debriefing was noted. Holding back from personal development indicates that a surface approach to learning is created by some students.
Therefore, ‘worldviews’ which lack informed educational philosophy development may exist. Corey states that,

> As a counsellor, you need to remain open to your own growth and to address your own problems if your clients are to believe in you and the therapeutic process (2009: 6).

If the therapeutic relationship is not created effectively by a guidance counsellor then pupils are left without an effective counselling service. As guidance counsellors are somewhat autonomous in their everyday roles they may focus on providing a careers focused service, avoiding counselling situations. Considering the recent literature suggesting careers and counselling cannot be separated (Niles, 2011) avoiding counselling situations in turn damages the career service also. The expressed comments regarding sensitivity to the counselling process were in the minority but do however indicate learning at a surface level. The majority of comments reflected a deep learning during the counselling process. For example, one graduate describes how the learning reached an ‘upper level’ during the counselling modules. UL graduates recognise these scenarios and they mainly express ‘worldviews’ reflective of the positives of achieving balance in their roles through a strongly counselling orientated service.

### 6.2.4 Balancing the role of the Guidance Counsellor

The convergence between career and counselling theoretical literature is highlighted; however, as explored in the literature review, guidance counselling is yet to establish itself as a separate body of knowledge. This theoretical gap may lead to a professional identity issue. Findings from this study show a variation across the UL graduates as to the title they use, some describe themselves as guidance counsellors some as career counsellors. In the literature review it was determined that a greater sense of identity in terms of each individual guidance counsellor would in turn lead to a greater sense of professionalism. In order to explore the literature surrounding the complexity of guidance counsellor role definition and professional identity further I asked interviewees to express what it means to them to be successful in the guidance counselling role. For the most part graduates from the UL programme indicate that achieving balance between the various expectancies in the guidance counselling role is a significant factor which determines success. However the difficulties (time constraints) with achieving balance are highlighted by graduates. At the Institute of Career Guidance
(UK professional careers education association) annual conference in Belfast Geary and Liston (2010) facilitated a workshop in which a model for balancing the three-dimensional role of the guidance counsellor in the Irish context is presented. This model extends the popularly used model of three interconnecting circles (educational, vocational/career, personal/social) by illustrating a surrounding circle (see Fig 6.1).

Fig 6.1 Model for balancing the three-dimensional role of Guidance Counselling (Geary and Liston, 2010)

In this illustration the role of the guidance counsellor is emphasised as being within a whole guidance service. The skills of organisation, collaboration, management, team work and self-care are listed to balance the complexities and identify the priorities required for the role of the guidance counsellor. Geary and Liston (2010) further explain this model through the following points:

- Potential for identity diffusion and overload for the guidance counsellor
- Balancing roles i.e. Coordinator of the Guidance Counselling Service/ delivery of an effective guidance counselling provision
- Identifying priorities i.e. Junior Cycle, TYO, Senior Cycle, LCA, LCVP, Leaving Certificate
- Organisational, planning, management, advocacy, team work.
- Self Care, boundary negotiation and setting (Geary and Liston, 2010).
Findings from this thesis indicate how graduates have gained “huge benefit” from the programme. However graduates express how a lack of guidance counselling provision has restricted the use of the professional skills they have gained from the course. Geary and Liston (2010) suggest graduates, in light of current provision restrictions, draw on the skills they gained at initial guidance counsellor education level and continue good self-care practice. A contemporary perspective offered by Niles et al (2011) which encourages guidance counsellors to search for alternative, informal opportunities to provide guidance is also useful to consider. Guidance counsellors particularly in second level settings may recognise extra-curricular activity time, lunch time or school excursions as opportunities to provide informal guidance.

6.2.5 Continuous Professional Development Needs and the Overall evaluation of the UL Programme

The NGF (2007) report presents a competency framework (see fig 1.1) which is said to play a significant role in influencing the future professional education and training of practitioners who will provide guidance across the life cycle and in a range of different contexts. When observing graduates expressed needs it can be asserted that graduates feel over- or under-prepared to provide specific areas within the guidance service that is in line with quality standards for service delivery. The NGF (2007) lists five competency areas namely; counselling, theory and practice of vocational/educational and personal/social guidance throughout the lifespan, labour market education and training, information and resource management and professional practice. Graduates express that they are very well prepared for the counselling role. In relation to labour market education graduates feel under prepared but some recognise that information in this area is easily accessible. As discussed earlier in this chapter many graduates express frustration with balancing the various roles they are required to undertake. In the NGF (2007) framework information and resource management are described as including the ability to:

Develop, maintain and review information management strategies to provide up-to-date personal and social, educational and vocational/career information (2007: 7).
In this framework the emphasis on management strategies is an area which the UL guidance counsellor education programme director and past graduates may consider enhancing. Furthermore this framework discusses guidance counselling across the lifespan. Graduates comments indicated the strong second-level focus of the UL programme and expressed feelings of isolation in the adult guidance community the UL programme. These findings can be viewed as positively in that the UL programme is focusing on the sector (second-level education) which 56% of its graduates are now employed in. However a significant number are working in other guidance settings (17%) and these graduates need to be considered. By focusing on guidance counselling across the lifespan all participants will be catered for. Having discussed the NGF (2007) framework considering the findings from this study the main area UL graduates would benefit from CPD is in relation to information management strategies to provide up-to-date personal and social, educational and vocational/career information across the lifespan.

When the findings from this study are observed alongside the NGF (2007) competency framework for providing quality guidance it can be concluded that good practice in terms of counselling, professional practice and theory and practice vocational/educational and personal/social guidance are evident. However areas for enhancement include viewing guidance throughout the lifespan, labour market education and training, information and resource management. To observe ‘quality’ as based on “quality as fit for the purpose” (Biggs 2001: 222) the findings from this study are observed to ensure the aim, objectives and teaching processes of the UL programme are aligned. A ‘quality institution’ is said to be one that has high level aims that it intends to meet, that teaches accordingly, and that continually upgrades its practice in order to adapt to changing conditions, within resource limitations (Biggs 2001: 222). It has been recognised nationally that changes are occurring to both the practice of guidance counselling and the profile of the guidance counsellor. Biggs (1999: 17) states that using teaching and assessment methods that support the explicit aims and objectives of the course: this is known as ‘practicing what you preach’ is a significant factor in terms of creating the deep approach to learning. The UL programme aims and objectives are outlined in Chapter 4. The main aim of the programme is met as the programme qualifies practicing teachers and other relevant professionals as guidance counsellors. The programme sets out to achieve a deep learning approach in that, the
course is intended to provide participants with deeper understanding of the counselling process. Findings show that the experiential learning teaching and learning focus do in fact lend to a deeper learning process. The experiential learning cycle provides a pattern for developing and facilitating educational experiences that include reflection, generalizing and abstracting, and transfer of the learning from the educational or instructional experience. Graduates comments reflect the positive learning experiences during this educational process.

I thought the learning experience was very good, the way the education was delivered was different because every lecturer went along with a more experiential method of education, which I thought was very good. (Interviewee)

Furthermore graduates express outcomes of self-understanding and personal insight. For example,

I’m better. I suppose before I would never have been good for standing up for something for myself and I suppose I’d be more inclined to do this now. It has made me more confident and I even find as my job is going on I’m getting better at it and improving at it. (Interviewee)

When alignment between the aim, objectives, learning process and outcome of the UL programme is observed it can be determined that the UL programme provides a quality learning experience as it plans for, facilitates and achieves deep learning experiences.

6.4 Insights from European Programmes for Guidance Counsellor Education

Insights into and comparisons with guidance counsellor programmes have been drawn upon throughout this study. In the literature review insights into how guidance counsellor education programmes are influenced differently by top-down and bottom up factors are outlined. Undertaking this additional exploration element to the research provides the opportunity to consider guidance counsellor education from both a National and European perspective. The focus of this section is to reflect upon the Finish and United Kingdom guidance counsellor education programmes. Findings from a Finish comparative study (Lairio, M. and Nissila, P., 2002) of the School Counsellors’ conceptions of the core tasks of school counselling in 1990 and 1997 questioned counsellors on ‘What core tasks do they consider to be core tasks of school counselling’. Findings show that in 1990 the core task was noted (40%) to be career
counselling whereas in 1997 supporting growth and development (40%) was listed as the core task with career counselling dropping to (14%). This suggests a significant change over time with regard to the core role of the Guidance Counsellor in Finland. Lairio, M. and Nissila, P. (2002) suggest this is due to a changed and increasing in problems facing teenagers over time. Observing this study highlights the importance of National social and economic conditions and the effect these conditions can have on the core tasks of guidance counsellors. Therefore it is important for education programmes such as the University of Limerick graduate diploma in Guidance Counselling to keep up to date with the changes in core tasks which Guidance Counsellors require to be prepared for. Follow-up studies extending the work of this thesis would explore changes over time in the core tasks of guidance counsellors. From observing the UK a varying system to Ireland is observed. The programme for comparison in the UK was offered online. This is something which is not yet practiced in Ireland. Considering the OECD country note for the UK one would hesitate at the prospect of such a course in Ireland. The country note concludes that while the qualifications and training structure in the UK is very diverse and highly developed compared with many other countries, a new, more coherent structure is necessary that would rationalise the many qualification routes and provide clear progression paths (OECD, 2003). In Ireland the qualification routes and progression paths to becoming a guidance counsellor in second-level education are very clear with strict requirements, however emerging sectors of the guidance community are not so straightforward. It is necessary for clear progression paths for all guidance sectors to be clarified and upheld. Bimrose (2006) discusses the problems which have emerged in the UK has a result of an ad-hoc system of initial training and CPD. She discusses an array of policy changes to service delivery and changes to initial training. Bimrose (2006) also refers to McCarthy (2001: 14) who highlights worrying trends regarding CPD across guidance practitioners in Europe. Similarly to the UK CPD is optional in Ireland however results of this study indicate high levels of CPD amongst graduates. With 48.2% (n=40) of graduates having undertaken further formal education following the completion of the UL programme and many others listing short term courses such as, psychometric testing, reality therapy, counselling and psychotherapy and whole school planning. A rationale which may contribute to the high levels of CPD may be due to the supportive nature of the IGC who provide various opportunities for CPD. 88.2% of graduates of the UL
programme are members of the IGC. Another explanation for UL graduates interest in CPD may be due to the fact that the programme promotes a deep level of learning which in turn can lead to a lifelong learning commitment (Biggs: 1999).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research findings alongside current literature. Many concluding points can be asserted following this discussion chapter. The chapter discusses findings considering the 3P’s model and it can be concluded that the UL programme models good practice in terms of being constructively aligned and providing quality graduates who have participated in an education programme which promotes and facilitates a deep level of learning.

The UL programme can be defined as meeting the requirements set down by the IGC. This chapter indicates that for a sustainable approach to the curriculum development of a guidance counsellor education programme an inclusive relationship between the course director and the IGC is required.

Overall the input factors to the UL programme provide the opportunity for deep learning. When observing the process and output factors of the UL programme deep learning occurs for the most part. Indications of surface learning are explored in this chapter with the expressed sensitivity to personal counselling being highlighted as problematic.

This chapter provides many examples of good practice in guidance counsellor education such as balancing the content of the guidance counsellor education programme, attributing to high CPD levels and the positives of experiential learning. Areas for improvement were also highlighted such as providing access to resources for outreach students and balancing the second level focus of the programme to accommodate guidance offered in settings across the lifespan.

The following chapter concludes these discussion points in light of the aim and objectives of this thesis.
CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

The title of this research states that the research is ‘an evaluation of the graduate diploma in guidance counselling at the University of Limerick’. In addition, the title informs the reader that the study will present ‘implications for policy and practice in initial training for guidance counsellors’. This chapter will provide concluding comments on this interpretive evaluation and state the implications of the study. To date this document has clearly outlined and discussed the findings of this evaluation in light of the model used for evaluation and the central research questions. In this chapter I return to the aim of the research to clearly outline how I achieved what I set to do. The aim of the study was to explore the extent to which the Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling at the University of Limerick is in keeping with both international and national policy requirements in relation to the initial education of guidance counsellors. The objectives and framework for this study demonstrate that I

- conducted an evaluation of the UL programme using an input-process-output model which has been informed by Biggs (The ‘3P’ model of Teaching and Learning) and a framework developed by The Canadian Research Working Group (Borgen, Hiebert and Michaud) on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development;
- explored the complexities of an initial education programme for guidance counsellors;
- revealed the key narratives of practising guidance counsellors;
- identified good practice which will enhance the provision of guidance counsellor initial education.

In addition to revisiting the aim and objectives of the study and stating the implications of the study, a final section will conclude the research from the perspective of an outsider researcher (myself) looking in at the current Irish guidance counselling community. It is important at this point to remember that “a successful illuminate evaluation should never spring any surprises in the conclusion” (Burden: 225)
7.1 Findings and Implications for Policy and Practice

The overall aim of this study set out to determine the extent to which the UL GDGC is in keeping with policy documents relating to the initial education of guidance counsellors. The findings from this research indicate that the UL programme is closely aligned with national policy but international policy features to a lesser extent. The guidance counsellor education programme is reliant on the ability of the course director and the national professional body to translate international policy into practice.

The translation of international policy by national policy makers and professional bodies in guidance counselling and guidance counselling education programmes could be examined. Comparing international policy documents with guidance counselling education programme content documents and interviews with programme co-ordinators would provide data to add to the discourse.

Presently one can observe the international variation in guidance counselling education programmes and the variation as to who decides on the programme. This in effect causes the implementation of a guidance counsellor education programme to be a complex task. The complexity of the personal narrative, which includes the course leader’s own experience and education mixed with the difficulty of trying to bring national policies, professional body frameworks and institutional policy is substantial. This is an ongoing issue which course leaders need to address through awareness, membership of professional guidance and counselling forums and continuing professional development. The UL GDCG programme development approach keeps the course in line with national standards but also allows the individual learning needs of guidance counsellors in Ireland to be met when recognised by the course director.

A review of literature indicates variation in the guidance counsellor role and the link is made to the guidance counsellor education programme. A theoretical framework is needed in order to understand if it is this link which is causing variation in the type of guidance counselling the client receives. Therefore, in order to systematically understand the conditions that cause a variation in the type of training guidance counsellors receive, I perceive that a theoretical framework which encompasses guidance counsellor competencies, interplay between national, international and institutional policy and considers the sociological, psychological is required.
The objective of this study, to conduct an evaluation of the UL GDGC, was reached. From observing constructive alignment between the inputs, process and outputs of the programme it can be determined that deep learning leading to significant personal and professional outcomes occurred for most graduates. Factors which strengthened the learning process included the emphasis on personal counselling and the constructive teaching methodologies used. However, a surface level approach to learning was indicated by some graduates. Factors which led to this type of learning included withdrawing from the counselling focus and resource barriers associated with outreach learning. Throughout the study the University of Limerick GDGC is referred to as an education programme rather than a training programme. The decision to refer to the term ‘education’ rather than ‘training’ evolved as it can be observed that a broader assimilation of knowledge, skills and ability is an outcome of the UL course.

The methodology used for this evaluation showed considerable strength. As the primary concern of illuminative evaluation is with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction (Burden, 2008), the learning milieu surrounding the UL GDGC is well represented. The model for evaluation used in this study can be used to evaluate other guidance counselling education or general education programmes. Variations of the model have been used previously but adding the contextual dimension significantly increases the illuminative qualities of the study and leads to a deeper understanding of the learning milieu. I feel research methodologies in guidance counselling can be better served by educational models of evaluation rather than economic accountability models.

Some of the complexities surrounding the initial education programme for guidance counsellors include,

- The translation of policies from the top of the pyramid to the actual content and methodology of a guidance counsellor training course;
- The rapidly-changing role of guidance and counselling;
- The movement of the guidance counselling education programme into reality;
- The extensive demands of the guidance counselling role.
With these complexities recognised I suggest literature be developed that is targeted towards the guidance counselling profession, which supports the theoretical integration of the three-dimensional model of guidance counselling and outlines theory alongside practical applications.

The discourse surrounding the lack of males in education and the reluctance among males to be involved in affective domains in education needs to be addressed. The argument for the need for more male guidance counsellors needs to heard as it is just as important that male concerns are facilitated by the guidance counselling service as female.

This research identified, acknowledged and affirmed good practice in guidance counselling education. The study can be used to promote continuing improvement in the quality of education for guidance counsellors.

7.2 Significance of the Study

The findings from this evaluation are significant to a variety of stakeholders and interested parties including the initial course design team of the UL programme. The UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling (GDGC) course design team consisted of, two representatives from the IGC, the Acting Dean for the College of Education (as it was known at the time) in UL, the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs in UL, the Head of the Education and Professional Studies Department in UL, a lecturer from the Education and Professional Studies Department in UL, a lecturer from the Personnel and Employment Relations Department in UL, an educational psychologist representing the DES and the Head of the counselling unit in UL. International guidance counselling course directors have been involved in the data collection phases of the study, making this research of interest to the wider international course director community. Furthermore, concluding remarks from this research can inform the work of course leaders and lecturers in guidance counsellor training, the IGC, the National Centre in Guidance Education (NCGE), the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and practicing Guidance Counsellors. This research also benefits the teaching profession and the wider education community. By identifying good practice in guidance counsellor education the continuing professional development experience of teachers participating in this course is recorded. In the Irish educational context a three-
dimensional service has been adopted and as Sultana (2004) indicates, “problems can arise when career guidance is delivered as a sub-specialism within another main work role”. The notion of the unity of career and personal counselling has been repeatedly reinforced but the provision and management of such a model requires additional support. This research study has raised policy questions which will be important for key stakeholders such as the IGC, NCGE, DES, practitioners and course providers in the Irish guidance counselling community to consider in order to support a balanced approach to the three-dimensional model for guidance counselling.

A strength of this study is its reciprocal nature in terms of its constant consideration of policy, practice and research.

This research offers new insights on guidance counsellor education programme delivery and critically considers how education programmes can prepare graduates for the complex role of a guidance counsellor.

7.3 Personal Journey
From the perspective of my personal and professional development as a teacher, this study has provided a depth of understanding into one of the most significant services (guidance counselling) which is provided in Irish education and adult guidance settings.
I have developed an increased awareness of the multitude of factors that support and impinge on a learning programme. Overall, the study has brought to light the value of an effective guidance counselling system.

Furthermore, I feel from undertaking this study that I have gained many research skills. These skills can be put into action for any future investigations which I may undertake. Completing research answers questions and brings clarity to an issue. No doubt many questions will come to light throughout my future teaching career. The project completion was an enjoyable and interesting experience but required much self-belief. Acknowledging my own ‘worldview’ or ‘value system’ was the pinnacle point, which in turn led to required self-belief in order to complete the study. My worldview reflects an understanding of guidance counselling which is placed as a societal stance rather than focusing on economic gain. The affective domain of education in my view and personal experience far outweighs other domains. I would like to conclude my research by synopsising what I have observed and learnt in the last four years as an outsider researcher who has made a conscious effort to become immersed in the guidance counselling community.

1. Guidance Counsellors need to be flexible in order to be in time with the speed of change and shifting nature of guidance counselling in order to successfully conduct their roles and responsibilities.

2. Guidance counselling as a profession has a wide base of clients, which in turn equals wider expectancies. The wider education profession need to understand and support guidance counsellors in undertaking their many roles.

3. Recognising the values and perspectives that are close to the Irish teaching profession, and in particular school culture, is the key to the success of a whole-school approach to guidance counselling.

4. Acknowledging and accepting your own worldview will undoubtedly lead to a deeper learning outcome whether you are learning as an insider or outsider in the guidance counselling community.
7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has stated how the study has done what it set out to do and has also presented the conclusions of the research. This chapter shows how conclusions from this study contribute to the future practice of guidance counselling. Furthermore I can conclude that the personal growth I have gained while undertaking this study addressed many of my own questions objectively.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Dissemination

This appendix illustrates the additional tasks undertaken in relation to this research study. Publications to date resulting from this research include three online conference papers (see appendices 2/3/4). The research has been presented at many conferences including three National and three International. Also the research has been illustrated through poster presentation.

Conference Presentations and Proceedings


Conference Presentations


Workshops
Geary, T and Liston, J (2011) ‘Weaving the tread between initial training, professional development and reflective practice for guidance counsellors’ workshop for The Institute of Guidance Counsellors Annual Conference, Mary Immaculate College: Limerick

**Conference Poster**


**Awards resulting from this research**

I am a recipient of the University of Limerick Advanced Scholars award.
I have been awarded ‘The Teaching Council of Ireland’ Research Bursary in support of this research.
The British Educational Research Association supported my attendance at their conference with a student travel bursary.
Appendix 2: Geary, T and J, Liston (2009)


The Complexity of Implementing a Guidance Counsellor Education Programme

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ABSTRACT

The Guidance Counsellor has a significant role to play in Irish secondary schools as they provide for the personal, social, educational and vocational development of the young people. At the National Guidance Forum (2007) the ‘Guidance for Life’ report was launched. In this report it suggests areas to improve in Guidance Services. One such suggestion it lists is to,

Ensure that people working in guidance are well-trained and supported, with proper quality assurance procedures in place.

(2007, p.34)

In order to observe such a suggestion an exploration into the efficacy of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling in providing quality graduates to practice as guidance counsellors is taking place. This paper presents an aspect of the research which explores the theoretical frameworks and influences on the guidance counsellor education programme. The literature and course director’s personal narrative on the course content of guidance counsellor education programmes show that variation exists who decides on the course content. This paper describes the complexity of implementing a Guidance Counselling education programme and suggests how this may be addressed.

INTRODUCTION

When observing the Irish guidance and counselling context, the Education Act 1998 states that “a school shall use its available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices”. Today the role of the guidance counsellor in Ireland is central to the whole guidance service which pupil’s receive. The roles which the guidance counsellor undertakes are listed by the National Professional Bodies for guidance counselling in Ireland namely, The Institute for Guidance Counsellors and the National Centre for Guidance in Education. Listed among the roles are counselling, support,
assessment, information, classroom guidance activities, planning and organising workshop learning, referrals and professional development. Ryan 1993 noted how,

The Irish guidance counselling service tends to be a compromise between the American model which emphasises personal counselling and the European model which almost exclusively focuses on the narrow concept of career guidance.

(1993, p.63)

A more recent study for The Economic and Social Research Institute in Ireland looked specifically at guidance provision in second-level schools. This study documented how “schools varied widely in the nature of the guidance counsellor’s role” (McCoy et al 2006, p.91). This study observed how variation existed in terms of the range of activities of the Guidance Counsellor and the balance of time spent on the areas of career guidance, educational support and personal support. When literature is examined closely to determine an explanation for this variation it is found that,

The priorities that guidance workers attach to their work tasks appear more a function of the particular type of training they have undertaken. They may not necessarily be a function of clients needs.

(McCarthy 2001, p.7)

Programmes such as the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance and counselling have a significant effect on the nature of guidance counselling people receive. The subject content and methods used to teach the content influence guidance counsellors not only during their participation in the programme but throughout their career and consequently the people they deal with. Therefore the initial education guidance counsellors receive is linked to their function as guidance counsellors. The aim of this research is to observe if the type of training offered at the University of Limerick is in fact, influencing the service graduates provide.

The graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling at the University of Limerick is a two year part-time programme that is delivered over four semesters and includes an induction week, two residential weekends and two summer schools, a school placement and an industrial placement as part of the course. Participants are required to attend ten sessions of personal counselling each year of participating on the course. Participants can take part in the programme on campus at the University of Limerick or they may choose from three other outreach locations such as Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre, Dublin West Education Centre or at Kerry Education Service Centre. The programme has been in operation at the University of Limerick for just over ten years and over two-hundred and fifty Guidance Counsellors have graduated from the programme.

In order to gain further insights into areas of interest for this paper a personal narrative was analysed from the course leader in MA in Education; Guidance Studies at the University of Derby. This is an online programme offered by the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) – a centre for excellence in research and professional development within the career guidance sector. The course is broken down into stages, so one can achieve related qualifications: Postgraduate Certificate in Education, Postgraduate Diploma in Education: Guidance Studies and MA Education: Guidance Studies and proceed through a stage format. McCarthy 2001 notes the significance of such a course as he states that,

There appears to be little attempt nationally, UK expected, to develop a training and qualifications structure that enables guidance workers to progress from non-expert to expert status.

(2001, p.7)
THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

To begin any attempt to move toward a theoretical understanding of the efficacy of a guidance counselling education programme, a basic understanding of the development of Guidance Counselling must be outlined. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to present a comprehensive review of the theoretical literature on the development of Guidance Counselling, points can be summarised under three categories, the influence of pastoral and religious roles and responding the client needs. As McLeod puts it,

To understand what counselling is, and what counsellors do, it is necessary to have an appreciation of the historical origins and development of this form of helping.

(McLeod 1998, p.29)

Baker and Gerler describe,

What we think of currently as school counselling did not begin with a formal design consisting of established goals, assumptions, and functions. It evolved to what it is today.

(2004, p.10)

Baker and Gerler describe how responding to local needs was the main influence when initiating guidance type services. Parsons, Beers and Freud influenced the development of school counselling in the early years of the twentieth century in the United States by responding to the needs for the students they taught. This lead to a growth in the 1920’s and 1930’s of the number of guidance teachers in schools however as Baker and Gerler note, “no widely accepted standards for training or practice existed” (2004, p.12).

As a result what emerged as the dominant school guidance model was described as trait and factor, or directive guidance which promoted enhancing normal adjustment, goal setting and assisting individuals to achieve satisfying lifestyles. Counselling included analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, counselling, and follow-up and techniques for forcing conformity and changing attitudes were recommended. The directive approach to guidance ultimately proved to be too constricted. This was not the ideal situation, as the need for personal counselling during War times was at a high point in the United States, it was however the beginning and it led to improvements throughout the guidance and counselling service in the United States. Most significantly, Post World War II the work of Carl Rogers, which emphasised the counselling relationship and climate, gradually emerged as the dominant guidance function in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Baker and Gerler describe how “Rogers influence had moved school counsellors away from being highly directive towards being eclectic” (2004, p.13) during a time (1960s) described as the boom era in United States. Some of the great theories with regard to guidance and counselling are formed as a result of theorists systematic response to peoples needs be it psycho-social needs, goal setting needs or the need to be listened to. New roles for guidance counsellors have been devised over time. Baker (1994) cited Repetto et al (2008) states that the role of guidance practitioners is defined according to the tasks they carry out, and as these tasks change over time, counsellors must be prepared to exercise many different professional roles. Today guidance counsellors work in an environment which has accumulated a vast number of theories on guidance counsellor competency, career development and
counselling theories. Repetto (2008) describes how based on increasing globalization, societal changes and technological changes there is a need to improve the initial and continuous education of guidance counsellors. However Repetto does state that there is little agreement on the type of training counsellors must receive in order to provide these services.

**COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

Competency frameworks have been suggested as an appropriate model for the development of guidance counsellor education programmes. Hiebert (2008) describes an International Competency framework which included core competencies of client advocacy, client cultural differences, designing, implementing and evaluating guidance and counselling programmes further to these competencies relatively new developments are considered in specialised competencies such as, Assessment, Information Management, Consultation and Co-Ordination, Community Capacity Building, Programme and Service Management are also included. The translation of the latest international competency framework is the challenge for course leaders and parties involved in devising programmes especially when the roles of the graduates of guidance and counselling programmes are already so diverse. However it is necessary that the international framework is implemented as it is described “as the basis for creating a tailor-made set of qualifications” (Repetto 2008, p.184)

Using a common framework across countries will promote a common way of viewing career-life development and a common way of describing the types of competencies needed to deliver quality educational and vocational guidance services.

(2008, p. 184)

Repetto 2008 notes that a competency framework can be used as a first step in developing training modules to address the training needs of guidance counsellors. The challenge is that with variation recognised between guidance counselling education programmes how the international competencies be translated into the individual guidance counsellor education programmes.

**THE FOCUS OF THE INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

From looking closely at the University of Limericks programme it can be described as a course with psychological emphasis. With the University of Limerick programme focusing on the psychological aspects of guidance counselling the standard and focus on the personal counselling dimension is emphasised. Psychology, sociology and economics are all connected with guidance counselling programmes and practice but the extent to which each underpins a guidance counselling education programme is debated in literature widely. In the UK context Watts & Law (1996) describe how trends in the past have seen many changes in the focus of guidance counselling.

Indeed as a crude generalisation, it could be argued that whereas in the 1940’s and 1950’s the careers field was dominated by psychology, in the 1960’s and 1970’s this dominance was challenged in the UK by sociology, and in the 1980’s and 1990’s by economics.

(1996, p.1)

With guidance counselling education programmes easily categorised into those with psychological, sociological and socio-economic emphasis the question is will the translation of
international competencies into modules on guidance counselling education programmes reduce or further extend the variation between programmes.

Upon examining the International Competencies it is obvious that the scope of training programmes will need to expand dramatically in order to give practitioners the competencies they need to provide quality services in a global society.

(Repetto 2008, p.178)

In order to examine the relationship between international competencies and the focus of education programmes the specific context of Ireland and the University of Limerick Programme is considered. Chamberlain and Delaney in article entitled ‘Guidance Counselling in Irish Schools’ state that,

Although broad parameters were derived from theoretical models developed in the United States and Europe, it is felt that the form taken by school guidance in Ireland should meet the distinctive educational and cultural needs of Irish society.

(British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 1977, Vol 5, no.1 pg 51)

The Irish guidance counselling service is among a minority of European Countries which takes a personal counselling emphasis. The breakdown of what areas guidance covers in a number of European countries is analysed in an ERSI report ‘Guidance for all?’ From the breakdown one can see that the emphasis in Europe is on the Vocational and Educational guidance of students with few countries providing personal guidance. Ireland however is among one of the few countries that does support personal guidance. The ERSI report describes how,

International work (OECD, CEDEFOP and World Bank reports) has tended to focus attention on the nature of career guidance services operating in schools, giving considerably less attention to the more ‘personal counselling’ dimension of the role which has traditionally been a feature of Guidance Counselling services in Irish schools.

(2006, p.13)

A study by the Department of Education cited in Shiel and Lewis (1992) shows the involvement of personal counselling in Irish Secondary School,

The 1985 survey of the School Guidance Committee ranked individual personal counselling as the activity in which they engaged most frequently at Junior-Cycle level.

(1992, p.11)

In setting the context for the research it was recognised that the strength of the personal dimension in guidance counselling in Ireland may be due to the work and influence of Carl Rogers. Many similarities between the development of guidance counselling in Ireland and America also come to light when setting the context for the development of guidance counselling.

When we look at the British context McGuiness describes how “In 1979, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate published a report (DES, 1979) in which they described ‘the personal development of children’ as ‘the central purpose of education’” (1998, p.8). This suggests that personal counselling was held with high esteem in the education system in Britain. However as we read on McGuiness describes a country which evolved with more of a focus on “testing, vocationalism, central control and, of course, the market place.” (1998, p.8) Economic commentators feel this may be the way forward and countries such as Norway and Poland have
also recognised this view by separating out a distinct career guidance role. In the ERSI report it states,

Within such ‘holistic’ systems like Ireland, economic commentators warn that there is a danger that career and educational guidance in schools can be marginalised within the broad concept of guidance.

(McCoy et al 2006, p.15)

They maintain that counsellors spend much of their time dealing with pupil’s personal problems and are possibly falling short of helping pupils with educational, vocational choices and long term career planning. However it has been argued that by complying with such economic views would in turn led to a situation where,

Pupils and students are viewed more as future contributors to the national economy, valuable for that potential contribution, rather than as intrinsically valuable for their humanity.

(McGuiness 1998, p.9)

It has also been argued that it is impossible to separate so distinctly career and personal guidance. Porfeli et al (2005) describe Super’s (1984), Krumboltz’s (1994) and Holland’s (1997) theories of career development by doing this they note how it is both the person and the context as well as the process and content orientations collectively that provide the most complete picture of career development. The guidance and counselling system in Irish secondary schools has recognised this climate, as guidance counsellors integrate personal counselling into the service they provide pupils. The education programmes which guidance counsellors attend play a significant role in the type of guidance service offered in Irish schools. The University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance and counselling reinforces the literature which suggests Ireland places a strong emphasis on the personal dimension of guidance and counselling. The dominance of a certain education focus can influence the type of guidance counselling service people receive.

WHO DECIDES ON THE PROGRAMME?

Professor Van Esbroeck, 2000 described how European surveys in relation to the career guidance and counselling provisions, the roles and tasks performed within the services and the training and qualification of guidance and counselling staff indicate that there exists an extreme variety. Programmes are said to be devised with a top-down or bottom-up approach. Sultana 2009 describes how both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses.

A key consideration here is which strategy is best suited to ensure sensitivity towards changing roles in a rapidly changing environment. If frameworks are built around the competences excellent practitioners have demonstrated in the past, they may fail to identify evolving competence requirements unless they are up-dated regularly.

(2009, p.23)

McCarthy 2001 describes both approaches are in existence when he describes how across countries there is wide variation on who decides the content and methodology of initial training for guidance workers. McCarthy observed that in Finland it is the course trainers who decide on content and methodology. In Ireland it is the course trainers & Professional Association and in the UK it is the trainers, Professional Association & Government who influence the programme. When looking further at curriculum development in education the concept of backward mapping is significant to consider in this context. Back-ward mapping (Elmore, 1994) assumes
essentially that the closer one is to the source of the problem the greater is one’s ability to
influence it. Guidance counsellor education programmes provide graduates with the training
required to address client’s needs/problems.

The problem-solving ability of complex systems depends not on hierarchical control but
on maximising discretion at the point where the problem is most immediate.

(1994, p.247)

With this considered the importance of the bottom up approach in guidance counselling would
be suggested as the more appropriate at addressing client’s needs.

THE NEED FOR A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While a review of literature indicates variation in the guidance counsellor role and the link is
made to the guidance counsellor education programme, a theoretical framework is needed in
order to understand if this link which is causing variation in the type of guidance counselling the
client receives. Therefore, in order to systematically understand the conditions that cause a
variation in the type of training guidance counsellors receive, the authors perceive that a
theoretical framework which encompasses guidance counsellor competencies, interplay
between national, international and institutional policy and considers the sociological, psychological or
socio-economic focus of a programme is needed.

METHODOLOGY

In order to observe the University of Limerick graduates the following statement has been
considered.

Any attempt to shape the field of CG by identifying what qualities and traits CG
practitioners should aspire to develop, and what training programmes can do in order to
promote the development of such traits, should be mindful of the complex and contested
issues that surround the endeavour

(Sultana 2009 p. 29)

Sultana 2009 concludes his paper on ‘Competence and competence frameworks in career
guidance; complex and contested concepts’ by describing how ways must be found to address
the critiques that have been made of the different versions of competence-based approaches,
particularly their tendency (a) to be reductionist and fragmentary in relation to tasks that are
complex and integrative of many dimensions of the self; (b) to define good practise solely in
relation to institutional norms rather than in consultation with practitioners or service user; and
(c) to forget that there are aspects of human behaviour which are more likely to be caught rather
than taught, and that therefore, excellence is sometimes the result not of targeted training as
much as socialisation into (and by) a community of established practitioners. Considering the
above this research strives to imply a methodology which is respectful of the complexity of
area, is open-minded to the definitions of good practice across institutions and acknowledges the
significant human behavioural aspect. Based on this a pragmatic approach combining both
qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed method approach) has been implied. The
methodology aims to identify the mixture of constructions that exist and bring them into as
much consensus as possible.

A pragmatic, multi-method approach to educational research attempts to map out or
explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from
more than one standpoint and in so doing making use of both quantitative and qualitative method types.

(Cohen et al 2000, p. 112)

To date an in-depth literature review has taken place and the emerging themes have been explored through personal narratives from course directors therefore exploring the human behavioural aspect. To explore this research further questionnaires of qualitative and quantitative nature will be administered to all graduates of the University of Limerick programme to discover career paths, the roles they provide to the guidance service and the continuing professional development needs they have. Finally Focus Groups with graduates from the three University contexts will take place. This paper presents the findings from the in-depth literature review with a specific focus on literature surrounding guidance counselling policy development. Also findings from the course directors personal narrative from the University of Limerick and University of Derby are presented. Cohen et al describe how,

Recent accounts of the perspectives and interpretations of people in a variety of educational settings are both significant and pertinent, for they provide valuable ‘insights into the ways in which educational personnel come to terms with constraints and conditions in which they work’

(2002, p.165)

As this method takes place during the earlier stage of the research Lincoln and Guba (1985) cited Cohen and Manion suggest that a validity check at this stage may include respondent validation. When the narrative accounts were analysed the participants were then sent summaries which they could add to or check the adequacy of the analysis. The analysis then took the form of discourse analysis to discover patterns and consider the human behavioural element.

FINDINGS

As previously outlined variation between countries exists with regard to the content and methodology of guidance counsellor education. From analysing the course directors’ personal narratives the role they play in decision making and the government and professional association influences are observed. Firstly observed in both course leader narratives were the influences on the course they run and if these influences correspond with McCarthy’s 2001 findings. McCarthy observed that In Ireland it is the course trainers & Professional Association who influence the programme. This can be said to be true for the University of Limerick programme as the course leader documents this throughout the narrative.

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) had through its executive set down specific requirements for various elements of programmes of study in Guidance Counselling. I did not view these national standards as limits to my personal and professional interests I felt very reaffirmed by these national standards as they set out the IGC’s requirements in both content and duration of the counselling theory and skills, experiential group work and professional issues of any emerging programme.

The standards set by the National Professional Body (IGC) have influenced the University of Limerick course. The course leader himself has a substantial influence on the course when the extract below is considered.

Elements of the programme which were very strong from the beginning were the counselling theory and skills, the experiential group process, which closely reflected the strengths of myself.
A rational for the evidence of a course leader’s influence is documented later in the narrative when the University of Limerick course leader describes how the first external examiner for the programme Dr. Bill Law concluded that the strong focus on the psychology of the human person and theories and practice of counselling were as a result of the focus of the programme in which the course leader studied.

"Bill pointed out that the programme could just as easily be focused on a sociological or testing/assessment slant. He discussed with me how the professional development of Course Directors has a very strong influence on the type of programmes which they develop, lead and teach on. This came as no surprise to me as I know that I was "playing" to my professional strengths. I was also aware that I was "playing" to my personal and my broader educational strengths."

In the University of Derby course leaders narrative it is noted how government and professional body links are observed in the course content however the influence of the course leader is also strongly observed. This is an interesting observation and it confirms Dr. Laws theory on how the course leaders training can reflect in they course they run.

"I want to make sure that all practitioners who have an interest in developing, growing their practice, and the ability to engage in the level of study will have access to a course of this nature."

Both course leaders documented in the narratives that before becoming course leaders they were involved in national projects regarding guidance.

"I developed an interest in quality issues and got involved in the pilot for the Guidance Council Quality Standards when they were being developed in 1999."

"I had worked for a year on the National Executive of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors during which time the Executive drafted and published a document mapping out the specific role and functions of the Guidance Counsellor and the Guidance Service within second level education. This work also influenced and shaped my thinking at the design stage of the programme."

The influence of undertaking work at a national level in the area of guidance and counselling lead to a clear translation of national guidance and counselling documents into the course content of their respective programmes. The translation however of international policy documents is less evident in the course leader’s narratives.

With the course leader now recognised as having a significant influence on the programme content it is necessary to look at the influences on them before becoming course leaders. When the personal narratives are examined closely it can be seen that both course leaders document a significant influence with links to the type of course they run. In the University of Limerick course leaders narrative the education he received in the area of client-centred therapy stands out as influential when analysing the narrative.

"The work of Carl Rogers in particular influenced me deeply at this stage of my life. His focus on the quality of relationships with people which includes, empathy, non-judgmental positive regard and genuineness were conditions for helping others."

In the University of Derby’s course directors narrative it shows how her practice rather than education was the major influential point.

"I had the opportunity to get involved in training voluntary and community advice workers, I spent the year travelling around the Black Country working in lots of estates and training providers supporting practitioners to understand and develop their adult
guidance skills. It was this experience which probably had the most profound effect as I became and still am passionate about professional development for practitioners. I worked with some practitioners on very poor estates who were barely literate but we were able to work through and get them a qualification.

The final extract chosen from each of the narratives shows that while variation between course leader’s background, practice and education exists the overall vision they aspire to for there students is quite similar.

We want our students to be able to make informed and considered contributions to the debate within their workplace, their professional associations and with their peers. We want our students to be critical thinkers who can challenge from an informed and considered perspective.

Students on the Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling are both challenged in their thinking processes as well as in their interpersonal and intrapersonal domains of learning.

CONCLUDING POINTS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Presently one can observe the international variation in guidance counselling education programmes and the variation as to who decides on the programme. This in effect causes the implementation of a guidance counsellor education programme to be a complex task. The complexity of the personal narrative which includes the course leader’s own experience and education mixed with the difficulty of trying to bring National policies, professional body frameworks and institutional policy is substantial. This is an ongoing issue which course leaders need to address through awareness, membership of professional guidance and counselling forums and continuing professional development.

From here this research will explore the graduates of the three research guidance counselling education programmes in order to ascertain if the education programme they completed influences the type of guidance counselling they provide and within what competency framework are they working.

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An Exploration of the efficacy of the University of Limerick Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling; Using Past Experiences to Inform Future Practice.

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ABSTRACT

The Guidance Counsellor has a significant role to play in Irish secondary schools and adult education as they provide for personal, social, educational and vocational development. At the National Guidance Forum (2007) the ‘Guidance for Life’ report was launched. In this report it suggests areas for improvement in order to enhance Guidance Services. One such suggestion it lists is to,

Ensure that people working in guidance are well-trained and supported, with proper quality assurance procedures in place.

(2007, p.34)

In order to observe such a suggestion an exploration into the efficacy of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling to provide quality graduates to practice as guidance counsellors is the primary task of this research. This paper presents an aspect of the research which explores findings from a questionnaire distributed to 250 graduates from the University of Limerick Guidance and Counselling programme. Firstly a background to the research will be presented, followed by a description of the theoretical frameworks surrounding the analysis of the questionnaire. Finally some of the questionnaire findings will be discussed and conclusions will be drawn. This paper draws on the graduates’ experiences of the University of Limerick Guidance Counselling programme in order to inform future practice in Guidance Counselling education programmes.
INTRODUCTION

When observing the Irish guidance and counselling context, the Education Act (1998) states that “a school shall use its available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices”. Today the role of the guidance counsellor in Ireland is central to the whole guidance service which pupils receive. The various roles which the guidance counsellor undertakes are listed by the National professional bodies for guidance counselling in Ireland namely, The Institute for Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE). Listed among the roles are counselling, support, assessment, information, classroom guidance activities, planning and organising workshop learning, referrals and professional development. Ryan (1993) noted how,

The Irish guidance counselling service tends to be a compromise between the American model which emphasises personal counselling and the European model which almost exclusively focuses on the narrow concept of career guidance.

(1993, p.63)

A more recent study for The Economic and Social Research Institute in Ireland looked specifically at guidance provision in second-level schools. This study documented how “schools varied widely in the nature of the guidance counsellor’s role” (McCoy et al 2006, p.91). This study observed how variation existed in terms of the range of activities of the Guidance Counsellor and the balance of time spent on the areas of career guidance, educational support and personal support. When literature is examined closely to determine an explanation for this variation McCarthy (2001) suggests that,

The priorities that guidance workers attach to their work tasks appear more a function of the particular type of training they have undertaken. They may not necessarily be a function of clients needs.

(McCarthy 2001, p.7)

Programmes such as the University of Limerick graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling can be said to have a significant effect on the nature of guidance counselling people receive. The subject content and methods used to teach the content influence Guidance Counsellors not only during their participation in the programme but throughout their career and consequently the people they deal with. The aim of this research is to observe if the type of training offered by the University of Limerick programme is in fact, influencing the service graduates provide. Furthermore an objective of the research includes investigating the University of Limerick graduates in areas such as, the reasons underpinning the high demand by teachers applying and wishing to study this programme, the career paths of graduates, the impact of these Guidance Counsellors on post primary education and adult guidance and the continuing professional development needs of these graduates.
THE PROGRAMME

The graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling at the University of Limerick is a two year part-time programme that is delivered over four semesters and includes an induction week, two residential weekends and two summer schools, a school placement and an industrial placement as part of the course. Participants are required to attend ten sessions of personal counselling each year of participating on the course. Participants can take part in the programme on campus at the University of Limerick or they may choose from three other outreach locations such as Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre, Dublin West Education Centre or at Kerry Education Service Centre. The programme has been in operation at the University of Limerick for just over ten years and over two-hundred and fifty Guidance Counsellors have graduated from the programme.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

To begin any attempt to move toward an understanding of the efficacy of a guidance counselling education programme, a basic understanding of the development of Guidance Counselling must be outlined. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to present a comprehensive review of the literature on the development of Guidance Counselling, points can be summarised under the following headings; 1. The influence of pastoral roles, 2. The influence of religious roles and 3. Responding the client needs. As McLeod puts it,

To understand what counselling is, and what counsellors do, it is necessary to have an appreciation of the historical origins and development of this form of helping.

(McLeod 1998, p.29)

Baker and Gerlers describe,

What we think of currently as school counselling did not begin with a formal design consisting of established goals, assumptions, and functions. It evolved to what it is today.

(2004, p.10)

Baker and Gerler describe how responding to local needs was the main influence when initiating guidance type services. Parsons, Beers and Freud influenced the development of school counselling in the early years of the twentieth century in the United States by responding to the needs for the students they taught. This lead to a growth in the 1920’s and 1930’s of the number of guidance teachers in schools however as Baker and Gerler note, “no widely accepted standards for training or practice existed” (2004, p.12). As a result what emerged as the dominant school guidance model was described as trait and factor, or directive guidance which promoted enhancing normal adjustment, goal setting and assisting individuals to achieve satisfying lifestyles. Counselling included analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, counselling, and follow-up and techniques for forcing conformity and changing attitudes were recommended. The directive approach to
Appendices

guidance ultimately proved to be too constricted. This was not the ideal situation, as the need for personal counselling during War times was at a high point in the United States, it was however the beginning and it led to improvements throughout the guidance and counselling service in the United States. Most significantly, Post World War II the work of Carl Rogers, which emphasised the counselling relationship and climate, gradually emerged as the dominant guidance function in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Baker and Gerler describe how “Rogers influence had moved school counsellors away from being highly directive towards being eclectic” (2004, p.13) during a time (1960s) described as the boom era in United States. Some of the great theories with regard to guidance and counselling are formed as a result of theorists systematic response to peoples needs be it psycho-social needs, goal setting needs or the need to be listened to. New roles for guidance counsellors have been devised over time. Baker (1994) cited Repetto et al (2008) describes how the role of guidance practitioners is defined according to the tasks they carry out, and as these tasks change over time, counsellors must be prepared to exercise many different professional roles. Today guidance counsellors work in an environment which has accumulated a vast number of theories on guidance counsellor competency, career development and counselling theories. Repetto (2008) explains that based on increasing globalization, societal changes and technological changes there is a need to improve the initial and continuous education of guidance counsellors. However Repetto does state that there is little agreement on the type of training counsellors must receive in order to provide these services.

RESEARCH TO DATE

Research to date has established that implementing the Guidance Counsellor education programme is a complex task.

Presently one can observe the international variation in guidance counselling education programmes and the variation as to who decides on the programme. This in effect causes the implementation of a guidance counsellor education programme to be a complex task. The complexity of the personal narrative which includes the course directors own experience and education mixed with the difficulty of trying to be inclusive to National policies, professional body frameworks and institutional policy is substantial. This is an ongoing issue which course leaders need to address through awareness, membership of professional guidance and counselling forums and continuing professional development.

(Geary and Liston, 2009)

It has been established that the course director’s ability to be reflexive and knowledgeable in areas such as policy development, international competency requirements and client’s needs significantly affects the Guidance Counsellor Education programme. Professor Van Esbroeck, (2000) described how European surveys in relation to the career guidance and counselling provisions, the roles and tasks performed within the services and the training and qualification of guidance and counselling staff indicate that there exists an extreme variety. Guidance Counselling Education programmes are said to be devised with a top-down or bottom-up approach. Sultana (2009) describes how both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses.
Appendices

A key consideration here is which strategy is best suited to ensure sensitivity towards changing roles in a rapidly changing environment. If frameworks are built around the competences excellent practitioners have demonstrated in the past, they may fail to identify evolving competence requirements unless they are up-dated regularly.

(2009, p.23)

McCarthy (2001) explains how both approaches are in existence when he describes how across countries there is wide variation on who decides the content and methodology of initial training for guidance workers. McCarthy observed that in Finland it is the course directors who decide on content and methodology. In Ireland it is the course directors & Professional Association and in the UK it is the course directors, Professional Association & Government who influence the programme. When looking further at curriculum development in education the concept of backward mapping is significant to consider in this context. Back-ward mapping (Elmore, 1994) assumes essentially that the closer one is to the source of the problem the greater is one’s ability to influence it. Guidance counsellor education programmes provide graduates with the education required to address client’s needs/problems.

The problem-solving ability of complex systems depends not on hierarchical control but on maximising discretion at the point where the problem is most immediate.

(1994, p.247)

With this considered the importance of the bottom up approach in guidance counselling would be suggested as the more appropriate at addressing client’s needs. Findings from phase one of this research establish that a combination model of both top-down course content requirements and bottom-up course director influence the course. The initial research findings establish grounding for the research to further explore issues such as the influence of complexities on the quality of graduates of a Guidance Counsellor Education programme and the outcomes for graduates from participating in the programme.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for exploring the efficacy of the University of Limerick Guidance and Counselling programme is based on a framework presented at the 2009 IAEVG (International Association of Education and Vocational Guidance) conference. The framework has been developed by the Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development. During the presentation Borgen et al describe how “without efficacy studies career services are vulnerable” (2009, slide 14). (Bernes et al. 2007) describe research regarding efficacy as having the potential to significantly contribute to the advancement of the field of career guidance and counselling. The model Borgen et al suggest for studying the effectiveness of guidance counselling is the input-process-outcome framework. Under the heading of input resources available such as, staff, funding, facilities, infrastructure and community resources are listed. Under the heading of process activities that link to outputs or
deliverables, generic interventions and specific interventions such as Interventions used by service providers skills used by service providers, home practice completed by clients, programs offered by agency, involvement by 3rd parties, quality of service indicators, stakeholder satisfaction are listed. Under the heading of outcome indicators of client change such as learning outcomes, knowledge and skills linked to intervention, personal attribute outcomes, changes in attitudes, intrapersonal variables (self-esteem, motivation, independence), impact outcomes, impact on client’s life, e.g., employment status, enrolled in training, societal and relational impact and economic impact are listed.

Similarly to this framework a model of classroom learning known as the Presage-Process-Product (3P’s) model has been considered. Biggs (2001) describes how learning can be identified, analysed and evaluated using presage, process and product model. The 3P’s model describes the influences on student learning outcomes and in doing so also illustrates the learning process.

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**Figure 1.** The ‘3P’s’ Model of Teaching and Learning (Biggs 2001, p.136)

These models (Biggs and Borgan et al) are observed along with the reflective cycle described by McNiff et al (2002) to from a three phase (input, process and output) framework which will be used when observing the data gained from the questionnaire. While the model for this research mainly reflects Borgan et al’s model it takes on board aspects of the Presage stage of the Biggs model in order to consider student factors carefully and it considers the exploring and identifying strands of the reflective cycle, therefore it can be described as an eclectic model.
THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was sent to all 234 graduates of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in Guidance Counselling. It consisted of both structured and unstructured questions which explored graduates experiences of the University of Limerick programme. Questions focused on gaining data in relation to the reasons graduates had for choosing to complete the programme, their career paths following completion of the programme and their continuing professional development needs. Data surrounding the priorities they attach to their work and the skills and competencies they gained from completing the course was also sought. The focus of questions developed throughout phase one of the research and also throughout a piloting process. A total of 37.3% returned the postal questionnaire. Responses to the structured questions were analysed using SPSS and answers to unstructured questions were thematically grouped in excel.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of results begins by observing both qualitative and quantitative data surrounding inputs, processes and outputs to the graduate diploma in Guidance Counselling. Inputs examined include student factors such as funding and the reasons graduates chose to participate in the programme. The course context factors such as the infrastructure, communications, resources and devised programme content are examined. Process factors analysed include the learning experiences graduates had during the programme and outcome factors examined include the service and careers of graduates following completion of the programme. For the purpose of this paper the emerging theme of the effect of the personal counselling focus of the University of Limerick programme is examined under input, process and output factors and discussed in depth. It has been explained in early parts of this paper that the focus of the guidance counselling programme and guidance counselling service is an ongoing debate. Should Guidance Counsellors be providing a careers service or personal counselling service?

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire presents the following findings in relation to students input factors. A gender imbalance which shows 68.3% of the programmes participants being female is not surprising considering the nature of the programme and the fact that 82% of participants are coming from the teaching profession. With only 16.5 % of participants receiving funding or part-funding, a substantial financial commitment to the programme is evident for over 80% of the participants with one such participant commenting on the programme being “enjoyable but dammed expensive”. However many note the fact that the programme is part-time is attractive and supports their continuation in the working environment. “The part-time aspect has allowed me to stay at work”. “I was not in a position financially to take a year off to study, so the part-time nature of the course made it accessible”. In fact when you observe the reasons graduates had for participating in the programme, the location (82%) and part-time convenience (89%) rate most highly. With regard to tutor input many made comments in relation to the nature of the relationship between the tutors and students. Tutors were described as having “genuine interest in students with staff interaction positive and helpful, overall excellent”. In general comments were positive towards tutors on the
course however specific negative comments did emerge. “I felt sometimes the tutors were not well enough prepared”, “high level of student interaction and good level of support from tutors”. Some negative comments emerged in relation to the administration of the programme, “administrative/organisational issues could have in some instances been better some more planning in advance” although interestingly it was the counselling aspect of the course which was noted to be most organised. “The UL programme was to a large extent very well organised and well run especially the counselling aspect.”

When observing the qualitative data for process factors aspects of the programme content and methodology which aided the learning process for participants emerged. Many commented on how they liked the assessment for learning approach, “I liked that it was continuous assessment and we had no written exams” however it was also noted on some occasions that this type of assessment was quite demanding “I resented having to complete so many essays”. A small number of responses highlighted the secondary school focus of the programme as being frustrating especially when working in an adult guidance context. Following the career paths of graduates it can be observed that 60% work in secondary guidance sector and just over 15% work in adult guidance sector. This figure will be useful for course tutors to consider when preparing modules in the future.

Overall the main body of graduates reflected on the programme as a very positive experience. With many comments noting the significant outcomes of the programme, “overall a positive experience. I grew a lot personally from the programme and my professional career was enhanced greatly from doing the course” and “it was a very positive experience. The course contributed greatly to my own self-development and greatly helped me to carry out my duties as deputy principal in a more enlightened fashion”.

THE FOCUS OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLING PROGRAMME: INPUT

The most interesting finding is in relation to the personal counselling focus of the graduate diploma in Guidance Counselling. The personal counselling domain is openly said to be the philosophy driving the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance counselling. With the course prospectus stating that personal counselling is ‘afforded primacy’ within the course and with just over 30% of graduates listing the programmes focus on personal counselling as a reason that attracted them to the programme many qualitative comments regarding the value the personal counselling focus emerged. Comments included, “The personal development was excellent”, “Very strong on counselling training. I found this of huge benefit in my role as a guidance counsellor” and “Heavy emphasis in the course around the counselling side of things. Well worth doing”. The psychological aspects of guidance counselling and focus on the personal counselling dimension are emphasised throughout the course. Psychology, sociology and economics are all connected with guidance counselling programmes and practice but the extent to which each underpins a guidance counselling education programme is debated in literature widely. In the UK context Watts & Law (1996) describe how trends in the past have seen many changes in the focus of guidance counselling.
Indeed as a crude generalisation, it could be argued that whereas in the 1940’s and 1950’s the careers field was dominated by psychology, in the 1960’s and 1970’s this dominance was challenged in the UK by sociology, and in the 1980’s and 1990’s by economics.

(1996, p.1)

Guidance Counselling education programmes are easily categorised into those with psychological, sociological and socio-economic emphasis and the comments from the questionnaire such as “The course places a heavy emphasis on Counselling” strongly confirm the existence of the personal focus in the University of Limerick programme. Chamberlain and Delaney in article entitled ‘Guidance Counselling in Irish Schools’ state that,

Although broad parameters were derived from theoretical models developed in the United States and Europe, it is felt that the form taken by school guidance in Ireland should meet the distinctive educational and cultural needs of Irish society.

(British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 1977, Vol 5, no.1 pg 51)

The Irish guidance counselling service is among a minority of European Countries which takes a personal counselling emphasis. The breakdown of what areas guidance covers in a number of European countries is analysed in an ERSI report ‘Guidance for all?’ From the breakdown one can see that the emphasis in Europe is on the Vocational and Educational guidance of students with few countries providing personal guidance. Ireland however is among one of the few countries that does support personal guidance. The ERSI report describes how,

International work (OECD, CEDEFOP and World Bank reports) has tended to focus attention on the nature of career guidance services operating in schools, giving considerably less attention to the more ‘personal counselling’ dimension of the role which has traditionally been a feature of Guidance Counselling services in Irish schools.

(2006, p.13)

THE FOCUS OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLING PROGRAMME: PROCESS

While many positive comments with regard to the personal focus of the University of Limerick programme existed. A minority of comments expressed a weakness to the programmes lack of focus on careers education. “I felt it was lacking with regards to developing knowledge and skills in the career area/ subject choice area and the course selection area, which a huge part of the work” and “The area dealing with careers exploration and practical work regarding careers information etc. was very poor.” These comments would suggest a need to improve the course in order to facilitate career education more effectively. These comments also highlight that even though the graduates are from the same education programme the counselling versus careers debate
continues to exist. This suggests that McCarthy’s comment with regard to the close relationship between guidance counsellors work tasks and the training they receive may not necessarily be the case. When graduates current work tasks were explored it was found that providing an information service was the task most often required followed closely by providing a counselling service. Consequently it may be the case that the course director and course team would reconsider the amount of time spent on the counselling aspect of the course to allow for more careers education. However this is a consideration which needs to be looked at carefully as qualitative comments from graduates lack clarity in relation to this debate. On one hand comments such as:

“...the content covered over the two years of the course is far too much for a graduate diploma other graduate diplomas have much less contact for the same qualification. The counselling content in terms of hours and personal counselling is far too heavy. This means the course lacks balance.”

On the other hand:

“...when I embarked on the programme I was very much aware of the time given to counselling as part of the course. However in stepping into the ‘careers’ class I felt very much in the dark. I relied heavily on others for support and spent more than an average amount of time planning for classes. That said I still would not change the counselling aspect of the course.”

Overall the counselling aspect is looked upon favourably by graduates. While some recognise a need for more careers information they also recognise that they can assess the information easily.

THE FOCUS OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELLING PROGRAMME; OUTPUT

Findings from a Finish comparative study (Lairio, M. and Nissila, P., 2002) of the School Counsellors’ conceptions of the core tasks of school counselling in 1990 and 1997 questioned counsellors on ‘What core tasks do they consider to be core tasks of school counselling’. Findings show that in 1990 the core task was noted (40%) to be career counselling whereas in 1997 supporting growth and development (40%) was listed as the core task with career counselling dropping to (14%). This suggests a significant change over time with regard to the core role of the Guidance Counsellor in Finland. Lairio, M. and Nissila, P. (2002) suggest this is due to a changed and increasing in problems facing teenagers over time. Therefore it is important for education programmes such as the University of Limerick graduate diploma in Guidance Counselling to keep up to date with the changes in core tasks which Guidance Counsellors require to be prepared for.

Most recently it has also been argued that it is impossible to separate so distinctly career and personal guidance. Porfeli et al (2005) describe Super (1984), Krumboltz (1994) and Holland (1997) theories’ of career development and by doing so they note how it is both the person and the context as well as the process and content orientations collectively that provide the most complete picture of career development. The guidance and counselling system in Irish secondary schools has recognised this climate, as guidance counsellors integrate personal counselling and career counselling into the
service they provide pupils. A study by the Department of Education cited in Shiel and Lewis (1992) shows the involvement of personal counselling in Irish Secondary School,

The 1985 survey of the School Guidance Committee ranked individual personal counselling as the activity in which they engaged most frequently at Junior-Cycle level. (1992, p.11)

In setting the context for the research it was recognised that the strength of the personal dimension in guidance counselling in Ireland may be due to the work and influence of Carl Rogers. Many similarities between the development of guidance counselling in Ireland and America also come to light when setting the context for the development of guidance counselling. When we look at the British context McGuiness describes how “In 1979, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate published a report (DES, 1979) in which they described ‘the personal development of children’ as ‘the central purpose of education’” (1998, p.8). This suggests that personal counselling was held with high esteem in the education system in Britain. However as we read on McGuiness describes a country which evolved with more of a focus on “testing, vocationalism, central control and, of course, the market place.” (1998, p.8) Economic commentators feel this may be the way forward and countries such as Norway and Poland have also recognised this view by separating out a distinct career guidance role. In the ERSI report it states,

Within such ‘holistic’ systems like Ireland, economic commentators warn that there is a danger that career and educational guidance in schools can be marginalised within the broad concept of guidance. (McCoy et al 2006, p.15)

They maintain that counsellors spend much of their time dealing with pupil’s personal problems and are possibly falling short of helping pupils with educational, vocational choices and long term career planning. However it has been argued that by complying with such economic views would in turn led to a situation where,

Pupils and students are viewed more as future contributors to the national economy, valuable for that potential contribution, rather than as intrinsically valuable for their humanity. (McGuiness 1998, p.9)

When analysing the output factors of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance counselling it can be established that the programme views the clients graduates will deal with as clients with both personal and career needs. The University of Limerick graduate gains competencies to provide for counselling to a high standard and provide for careers information when required.

“It was a very difficult programme, but in terms of personal and professional development it enabled me to feel confident in my role as a Guidance Counsellor. I felt competent in my dual role of both career advisor and counsellor.”
CONCLUSION

This paper has given an overview of the whole research area by outlining a background to the development of Guidance and Counselling and briefly explaining the research to date. By particularly focusing on the questionnaire framework for analysis and presenting results an in-depth element of the research has been explored with reference to international examples. The debate continues with regard to the counselling versus the career focus of guidance counselling. The University of Limericks graduate diploma in guidance counselling prioritises the personal counselling focus while considering the need for career guidance. The final phase of this research hopes to explore this concept further in order to establish the clients’ experiences of the graduates of the University of Limerick programme.

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Appendices


Schools Council (1967) Counselling in Schools; A study of the present situation in England and Wales, London; Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, Working Paper No.15


An Exploration of the Effectiveness of the University of Limerick Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling; Using Past Experiences to Inform Future Practice

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Abstract

In Ireland the role of the guidance counsellor is complex and challenging. The education that guidance counsellors receive is central to preparing them for the guidance counselling role. This paper provides a review of an exploration into the effectiveness of a guidance counsellor education programme. Of particular relevance to this paper is an aspect of the research which explores findings from a questionnaire distributed to 234 graduates from the University of Limerick Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling. Firstly, the background of the research will be presented, followed by a description of the model utilised during the analysis of the questionnaire. The questionnaire findings will be discussed and finally conclusions will be drawn.

1. Introduction

At the National (Ireland) Guidance Forum the ‘Guidance for Life’ report was launched. In this report it suggests areas for improvement in order to enhance guidance services. One such suggestion it lists is to ensure that people working in guidance are well-trained and supported, with proper quality assurance procedures in place [1]. When observing the Irish guidance and counselling context, the Education Act (1998) states that a school shall use its available resources to ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choice. Today the role of the guidance counsellor in Ireland is central to the whole guidance service which pupils receive. The various roles which the guidance counsellor undertakes are listed by the National professional bodies for guidance counselling in Ireland namely, The Institute for Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE). Listed among the roles are counselling, support, assessment, information, classroom guidance activities, planning and organising workshop learning, referrals and professional development. A recent study for The Economic and Social Research Institute in Ireland looked specifically at guidance provision in second-level schools. This study documented how schools varied widely in the nature of the guidance
counsellor’s role [2]. This study observed how variation existed in terms of the range of activities of the Guidance Counsellor and the balance of time spent on the areas of career guidance, educational support and personal support. Literature has been examined closely to determine an explanation for such variation. McCarthy suggests that the priorities which Guidance Counsellors attach to their work tasks appear more a function of the particular type of training they have undertaken, they may not necessarily be a function of client’s needs [3]. Programmes such as the Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling at the University of Limerick have a significant effect on the nature of the guidance counselling service which people receive. The guidance counsellor education programme subject content and methods used to teach the content influence Guidance Counsellors not only during their participation in the programme but throughout their career and consequently the people they deal with. The aim of this research is to observe if the type of training offered by the University of Limerick programme is in fact, influencing the service graduates provide. Furthermore an objective of the research includes investigating the University of Limerick graduates in areas such as, the reasons underpinning the high demand by teachers applying and wishing to study this programme, the career paths of graduates, the impact of these Guidance Counsellors on post primary education and adult guidance and the continuing professional development needs of these graduates.

2. The Development of Guidance and Counselling

To begin any attempt to move toward an understanding of the effectiveness of a guidance counselling education programme, a basic understanding of the development of Guidance Counselling must be outlined. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to present a comprehensive review of the literature on the development of Guidance Counselling, points can be summarised under the following headings; 1. The influence of pastoral roles, 2. The influence of religious roles and 3. Responding the client needs. As McLeod puts it, to understand what counselling is, and what counsellors do, it is necessary to have an appreciation of the historical origins and development of this form of helping [4]. Baker and Gerler describe how what we think of currently as school counselling did not begin with a formal design consisting of established goals, assumptions, and functions. It evolved to what it is today [5].

Baker and Gerler describe how responding to local needs was the main influence when initiating guidance type services. Parsons, Beers and Freud influenced the development of school counselling in the early years of the twentieth century in the United States by responding to the needs of the students they taught. This led to a growth in the 1920’s and 1930’s of the number of guidance teachers in schools however as Baker and Gerler note no widely accepted standards for training or practice existed [5]. As a result what emerged as the dominant school guidance model was described as trait and factor, or directive guidance which promoted enhancing normal adjustment, goal setting and assisting individuals to achieve satisfying lifestyles. Counselling included analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, counselling, and follow-up techniques for forcing conformity were recommended. The directive approach to guidance ultimately proved to be too constricted. This was not the ideal situation, as the need for personal counselling during War times was at a high point in the United States, it was however the beginning and it led to improvements throughout the guidance and counselling
service in the United States. Most significantly, Post World War II the work of Carl Rogers, which emphasised the counselling relationship and climate, gradually emerged as the dominant guidance function in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Baker and Gerler describe how Rogers influence had moved school counsellors away from being highly directive towards being eclectic [5] during a time (1960s) described as the boom era in United States. Some of the great theories with regard to guidance and counselling are formed as a result of theorists systematic response to peoples needs be it psycho-social needs, goal setting needs or the need to be listened to. New roles for guidance counsellors have been devised over time. Baker cited in Repetto et al, [6] describes how the role of guidance practitioners is defined according to the tasks they carry out, and as these tasks change over time, counsellors must be prepared to exercise many different professional roles. Today guidance counsellors work in an environment which has accumulated a vast number of theories on guidance counsellor competency, career development and counselling theories. Repetto [6] explains that based on increasing globalization, societal changes and technological changes there is a need to improve the initial and continuous education of guidance counsellors. However Repetto does state that there is little agreement on the type of training counsellors must receive in order to provide these services.

3. Research To Date

Research to date has established that implementing the Guidance Counsellor education programme is a complex task. Presently one can observe the international variation in guidance counselling education programmes and the variation as to who decides on the programme. This in effect causes the implementation of a guidance counsellor education programme to be a multifaceted task. The complexity of the personal narrative of the course director’s own experience and education mixed with the difficulty of trying to be inclusive to National policies, professional body frameworks and institutional policy is substantial. This is an ongoing issue which course leaders need to address through awareness, membership of professional guidance and counselling forums and continuing professional development [7].

It has been established that the course director’s ability to be reflexive and knowledgeable in areas such as policy development, international competency requirements and client’s needs significantly affects the Guidance Counsellor Education programme. Professor Van Esbroeck, [8] described how European surveys in relation to the career guidance and counselling provisions, the roles and tasks performed within the services and the training and qualification of guidance and counselling staff indicate that there exists an extreme variance. Guidance Counselling Education programmes are said to be devised with a top-down or bottom-up approach. Sultana [9] describes how both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. A key consideration here is which strategy is best suited to ensure sensitivity towards changing roles in a rapidly changing environment. If frameworks are built around the competences excellent practitioners have demonstrated in the past, they may fail to identify evolving competence requirements unless they are up-dated regularly [9].
McCarthy [3] explains how both approaches are in existence when he describes how across countries there is wide variation on who decides the content and methodology of initial training for guidance workers. McCarthy [3] observed that in Finland it is the course directors who decide on content and methodology. In Ireland it is the course directors and Professional Association and in the United Kingdom it is the course directors, Professional Association and the Government who influence the programme. When looking further at curriculum development in education the concept of backward mapping is a significant consideration in this context. Backward mapping [10] assumes essentially that the closer one is to the source of the problem the greater is one’s ability to influence it. Guidance counsellor education programmes provide graduates with the education required to address client’s needs/problems. The problem-solving ability of complex systems depends not on hierarchical control but on maximising discretion at the point where the problem is most immediate [10]. With this consideration in mind the importance of the bottom up approach in guidance counselling would be suggested as the more appropriate at addressing client’s needs. Findings from phase one of this research establish that a combination model of both top-down course content requirements and the course directors ability to recognise needs, influence the guidance counsellor programme. The initial research findings establish grounding for the research to further explore issues such as the influence of complexities on the quality of graduates of a Guidance Counsellor Education programme and the outcomes for participating graduates of the programme.

4. The Model

The model used for exploring the effectiveness of the University of Limerick Guidance and Counselling programme is based on a model presented at the 2009 IAEVG (International Association of Education and Vocational Guidance) conference. The model has been developed by the Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development [11]. The model suggested for studying the effectiveness of guidance counselling is the input-process-outcome framework. Under the heading of input resources available such as, staff, funding, facilities, infrastructure and community resources are listed. Under the heading of process activities that link to outputs or deliverables, generic interventions and specific interventions such as Interventions used by service providers skills used by service providers, home practice completed by clients, programs offered by agency, involvement by 3rd parties, quality of service indicators, stakeholder satisfaction are listed. Under the heading of outcome indicators of client change such as learning outcomes, knowledge and skills linked to intervention, personal attribute outcomes, changes in attitudes, intrapersonal variables (self-esteem, motivation, independence), impact outcomes, impact on client’s life, e.g., employment status, enrolled in training, societal and relational impact and economic impact are listed.

5. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to all 234 graduates of the University of Limerick Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling. It consisted of both structured and unstructured questions which explored graduates experiences of the University of Limerick programme. Questions focused on gaining data in relation to the reasons graduates had for choosing to complete the programme, their career paths following completion of the programme and their continuing professional development needs.
Data surrounding the priorities they attach to their work and the skills and competencies they gained from completing the course was also sought. The focus of questions developed throughout phase one of the research and also throughout a piloting process. A total of 37.3% returned the postal questionnaire. Responses to the structured questions were analysed using SPSS and answers to unstructured questions were thematically grouped in excel.

6. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of results begins by observing both qualitative and quantitative data surrounding inputs, processes and outputs to the graduate diploma in Guidance Counselling. Inputs examined include student factors such as funding and the reasons graduates chose to participate in the programme. The course context factors such as the infrastructure, communications, resources and devised programme content are examined. Process factors analysed include the learning experiences graduates had during the programme and outcome factors examined include the service and careers of graduates following completion of the programme. For the purpose of this paper the emerging theme of the effect of the personal counselling focus of the University of Limerick programme is examined under input, process and output factors and discussed in depth. It has been explained in early parts of this paper that the focus of the guidance counselling programme and guidance counselling service is an ongoing debate. Should Guidance Counsellors be providing a careers service or personal counselling service? Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire presents the following findings in relation to students input factors. A gender imbalance which shows 68.3% of the programme's participants being female is not surprising considering the nature of the programme and the fact that 82% of participants are coming from the teaching profession. With only 16.5% of participants receiving funding or part-funding, a substantial financial commitment to the programme is evident for over 80% of the participants with one such participant commenting on the programme being “enjoyable but damned expensive”. However many note the fact that the programme is part-time is attractive and supports their continuation in the working environment. “The part-time aspect has allowed me to stay at work”. “I was not in a position financially to take a year off to study, so the part-time nature of the course made it accessible”. In fact when you observe the reasons graduates had for participating in the programme, the location (82%) and part-time convenience (89%) rate most highly. With regard to tutor input many made comments in relation to the nature of the relationship between the tutors and students. Tutors were described as having “genuine interest in students with staff interaction positive and helpful, overall excellent”. In general comments were positive towards tutors on the course “high level of student interaction and good level of support from tutors”, however specific negative comments did emerge. “I felt sometimes the tutors were not well enough prepared”. Some negative comments emerged in relation to the administration of the programme, “administrative/organisational issues could have in some instances been better with some more planning in advance”. Interestingly it was the counselling aspect of the course which was noted to be most organised. “The UL programme was to a large extent very well organised and well run especially the counselling aspect.” When observing the qualitative data for process factors aspects of the programme content and methodology which aided the learning process for
participants emerged. Many commented on how they liked the assessment for learning approach, “I liked that it was continuous assessment and we had no written exams” however it was also noted on some occasions that this type of assessment was quite demanding “I resented having to complete so many essays”. A small number of responses highlighted the secondary school focus of the programme as being frustrating especially when working in an adult guidance context. Following the career paths of graduates it can be observed that 60% work in secondary guidance sector and just over 15% work in adult guidance sector. This figure will be useful for course tutors to consider when preparing modules in the future.

Overall the main body of graduates reflected on the programme as a very positive experience. With many comments noting the significant outcomes of the programme, “overall a positive experience. I grew a lot personally from the programme and my professional career was enhanced greatly from doing the course” and “it was a very positive experience. The course contributed greatly to my own self-development and greatly helped me to carry out my duties as deputy principal in a more enlightened fashion”.

7. Input Factors

The most interesting finding is in relation to the personal counselling focus of the graduate diploma in Guidance Counselling. The personal counselling domain is openly said to be the philosophy driving the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance counselling. With the course prospectus stating that personal counselling is ‘afforded primacy’ within the course and with just over 30% of graduates listing the programmes focus on personal counselling as a reason that attracted them to the programme many qualitative comments regarding the value the personal counselling focus emerged. Comments included, “The personal development was excellent”, “Very strong on counselling training. I found this of huge benefit in my role as a guidance counsellor” and “Heavy emphasis in the course around the counselling side of things. Well worth doing”. The psychological aspects of guidance counselling and focus on the personal counselling dimension are emphasised throughout the course. Psychology, sociology and economics are all connected with guidance counselling programmes and practice but the extent to which each underpins a guidance counselling education programme is debated in literature widely. In the UK context Watts and Law (1996) describe how trends in the past have seen many changes in the focus of guidance counselling. Indeed as a crude generalisation, it could be argued that whereas in the 1940’s and 1950’s the careers field was dominated by psychology, in the 1960’s and 1970’s this dominance was challenged in the UK by sociology, and in the 1980’s and 1990’s by economics [12] Guidance Counselling education programmes are easily categorised into those with psychological, sociological and socio-economic emphasis and the comments from the questionnaire such as “The course places a heavy emphasis on Counselling’ strongly confirm the existence of the personal focus in the University of Limerick programme. Chamberlain and Delaney in an article entitled ‘Guidance Counselling in Irish Schools’ state that, although broad parameters were derived from theoretical models developed in the United States and Europe, it is felt that the form taken by school guidance in Ireland should meet the distinctive educational and cultural needs of Irish society [13]. The Irish guidance counselling service is among a minority of European Countries which takes a personal counselling emphasis. The breakdown of
what areas guidance covers in a number of European countries is analysed in an ERSI report [2]. From the breakdown one can see that the emphasis in Europe is on the Vocational and Educational guidance of students with few countries providing personal guidance. Ireland however is among one of the few countries that does support personal guidance. The ERSI report describes how, International work (OECD, CEDEFOP and World Bank reports) has tended to focus attention on the nature of career guidance services operating in schools, giving considerably less attention to the more ‘personal counselling’ dimension of the role which has traditionally been a feature of Guidance Counselling services in Irish schools [2].

8. Process Factors

While many positive comments with regard to the personal focus of the University of Limerick programme existed. A minority of comments expressed a weakness to the programmes lack of focus on careers education. “I felt it was lacking with regards to developing knowledge and skills in the career area/ subject choice area and the course selection area, which is a huge part of the work” and “The area dealing with careers exploration and practical work regarding careers information etc. was very poor.” These comments would suggest a need to improve the course in order to facilitate career education more effectively. These comments also highlight that even though the graduates are from the same education programme the counselling versus careers debate continues to exist. This suggests that McCarthy’s comment with regard to the close relationship between guidance counsellors work tasks and the training they receive may not necessarily be the case. When graduates current work tasks were explored it was found that providing an information service was the task most often required followed closely by providing a counselling service. Consequently it may be the case that the course director and course team would reconsider the amount of time spent on the counselling aspect of the course to allow for more careers education. However this is a consideration which needs to be looked at carefully as qualitative comments from graduates lack clarity in relation to this debate. On one hand comments such as….

“…the content covered over the two years of the course is far too much for a graduate diploma other graduate diplomas have much less contact for the same qualification. The counselling content in terms of hours and personal counselling is far too heavy. This means the course lacks balance.”

On the other hand….

“…when I embarked on the programme I was very much aware of the time given to counselling as part of the course. However in stepping into the ‘careers’ class I felt very much in the dark. I relied heavily on others for support and spent more than an average amount of time planning for classes. That said I still would not change the counselling aspect of the course.”
Overall the counselling aspect is looked upon favourably by graduates. While some recognise a need for more careers information they also recognise that they can access the information easily.

9. Output Factors

The guidance and counselling system in Irish secondary schools has recognised a climate where guidance counsellors integrate personal counselling and career counselling into the service they provide pupils. A study by the Department of Education cited in Shiel and Lewis [14] shows the involvement of personal counselling in Irish Secondary Schools. The 1985 survey of the School Guidance Committee ranked individual personal counselling as the activity in which they engaged most frequently at Junior-Cycle level [14]. In setting the context for the research it was recognised that the strength of the personal dimension in guidance counselling in Ireland may be due to the work and influence of Carl Rogers. Many similarities between the development of guidance counselling in Ireland and America also come to light when setting the context for the development of guidance counselling. In the ERSI report it states, within such ‘holistic’ systems like Ireland, economic commentators warn that there is a danger that career and educational guidance in schools can be marginalised within the broad concept of guidance [2]. They maintain that counsellors spend much of their time dealing with pupil’s personal problems and are possibly falling short of helping pupils with educational, vocational choices and long term career planning. When analysing the output factors of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance counselling it can be established that the programme views the clients graduates will deal with as clients with both personal and career needs. The University of Limerick graduate gains competencies to provide for counselling to a high standard and provide for careers information when required. “It was a very difficult programme, but in terms of personal and professional development it enabled me to feel confident in my role as a Guidance Counsellor. I felt competent in my dual role of both career advisor and counsellor.”

10. Conclusion

This paper has given an overview of the whole research area by outlining a background to the development of Guidance and Counselling and briefly explaining the research to date. By particularly focusing on the questionnaire and presenting results an in depth element of the research has been explored with reference to international examples. The debate continues with regard to the counselling versus the career focus of guidance counselling. The University of Limericks graduate diploma in guidance counselling prioritises the personal counselling focus while considering the need for career guidance. The final phase of this research hopes to explore this concept further using in-depth interviews in order to establish further graduate experiences of the University of Limerick programme.
11. References


Appendix 5: Personal Methodological Journey

December 2009; In preparation for my Transfer

In order to establish a methodological approach for this research it was necessary for me to undertake a reflective process. As I strive to acquire this research to doctoral level, I felt it was very appropriate to deeply investigate my reasons for choosing a combined positivist and interpretative research paradigm.

Having received my primary degree in Physical Education and Geography I felt that I was in a strong position to understand both the qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches. While it was a ‘Bachelor of Science’ I received from the University of Limerick on reflection I feel I was more exposed to qualitative approaches. Of the modules I participated in, many had qualitative focus, even scientific models such as ‘Qualitative Biomechanics’. For example, I soon realised the value of knowing factual elements of Biomechanics (muscle movement) alongside reasoning and deeper thought processes (internal motivation, player burnout).

My interest in interpretative understanding reached pinnacle point during my fourth year of undergraduate studies. A combination of undertaking my final year project on Social, Personal and Health Education, participating in Teaching Practice, delving further into Social Geography and formulating a sense of educational professionalism all contributed to my awareness of human behaviour.

When beginning this research I had a firm desire to undertake a research study focused on a qualitative approach however I soon began to get drawn back towards literature surrounding the benefits of undertaking quantitative research. The pragmatism of statistical evidence was appealing. On deep reflection I feel my personal competitive nature was pulling me towards this approach. My reliance on the evidence from time trials and spending much of my adolescent life striving to set personal best times cannot be ignored. Unknowingly and devoid of outside influence one of my personal interests is that of setting sporting goals based on statistical evidence (times, laps or match scores).

In order to be respectful to both my personal interest, background, degree studies and this research study context, a methodological approach combining positivist and interpretive is both personally comfortable and appropriate for this research.

March 2010, Reading Rogers

A personal reflection and critical analysis of Rogers book ‘A therapists view of psychotherapy; on becoming a person’

Carl Rogers begins this book by ‘speaking personally’ and describing the development of his professional thinking and personal philosophy. He writes about the experience he has gained during many years of working with people with profound depth. The level of personal depth to which Rogers writes challenges the reader to emotionally engage with the book from the beginning. I found myself reflecting intensely on Rogers words. In particular what one could deduct as a description of his methodological approach to research which is presented in his ‘This is me’ chapter. I also observed the place of Rogers research philosophy in the personal ‘this is me’ chapter as exceptionally appropriate and created a clear understanding and higher order flow of thought. Rogers
describes with honesty how he at times conducted research for “unsavoury reasons” (pg 25) such as to satisfy others, to convince opponents and sceptics, to get ahead professionally or to gain prestige.

These errors in judgement and activity have only served to convince me more deeply that there is only one sound reason for pursuing scientific activities, and that is to satisfy a need for meaning which is in me.

So I have come to recognise that the reason I devote myself to research, and to the building of theory, is to satisfy a need for perceiving order and meaning, a subjective need which exists in me.

On analysis of Rogers personal comments in relation undertaking research I find myself reflecting on my own methodological stance. I feel I began this research conscious of the professional reward I would get from completing this research however now as I am getting to a place of depth within the research process I understand I too have subjective needs which this research can potentially address. I was somewhat overtaken by the “unsavoury reasons” as a beginning researcher. Significantly I am now conscious of the need I have to explore and gain order in relation to the standards of support and guidance offered to people. I have a personal desire to explore both my varied experience and the experiences of others which I have observed in relation to the support service offered by the guidance counsellor. Why do certain guidance counsellors not engage with students needs? Questions about this experience have always been unconsciously within me however through engaging with reflection, personal development and exploring my methodological approach I have allowed myself the freedom to become conscious of my subjective needs.

‘This is me’ could potentially be a research chapter which all researchers particularly those in the guidance counselling area could find beneficial to communicate their methodological approach.

Sept 2010, Sitting the Professional Practice Module
Having sat the first three hours of a professional practice module with 2nd year graduate diploma in guidance counselling students many emotions are ignited within me. Firstly the word ‘realistic’ was mentioned when the tutor presented a challenge to the prospective guidance counsellors in terms of the complexity of the role of a guidance counsellor. Why do guidance counselling students react in this way? Are some guidance counsellors rejecting challenges and creative thinking and using the term ‘being realistic’ as an escape? One particular comment in relation to a guidance counsellor being most happy for the student who received 500 points, as they worked the hardest for it, raised many emotions within me.

Are Guidance counsellors playing there part in the concept of the curriculum being ‘The story we tell our children about the good life’ (Trant) and Why would they do this when they are one of few people within a school who are not required to prepare students for a syllabus exam? This is similar to the value laden early 20th century directive approach to guidance counselling. Are guidance counsellors confirming to political influences or the hidden curriculum within a school? Are guidance counsellors mainly from an Irish/Catholic middle class background where 500 pts is seen as the norm? Have they failed to recognise that they have succeeded within the education system and that this is
not the case for all? Should teachers be guidance counsellors? Possibly I am in the best place to conduct this research having not practiced as a guidance counsellor and having not practised within the second level education system for a lengthy time.

One comment raised emotions of anger towards this particular guidance counsellor, it raised feelings from my past experiences of a guidance counsellor. On the other hand these observations have touched feelings of enthusiasm and made me even more aware of the importance to undertake this research and deal with the subjective need within me to answer questions around the quality and type of guidance counselling offered to people and why? This class highlighted that I have a strong subjective need to conduct this research and I most remember to stay open minded as this was just one comment!

I wish to use these reflections to construct questions and get answers during my research. If I can get an answer as to why some guidance counsellors do not deal with the personal domain of guidance counselling and favour a ‘realistic approach’ to guidance counselling then the research has the potential to inform further guidance counselling.
### Appendix 6: Adult Educational Guidance Policy and Practice Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Establishment of the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>NCGE hosts Irish Presidency Conference <em>Guidance in the Information Society</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>NCGE input into the Department of Education &amp; Science (DES) Green Paper <em>Guidance in Adult and Continuing Education</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>DES Green Paper on adult education published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Establishment of Regional Educational Guidance Service for Adults (REGSA), Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Qualifications (Education and Training) Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Education (Welfare) Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Formal implementation of Phase 1 of Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI), REGSA included in Phase 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Phase 2 of AEGI</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Establishment of the Adult Educational Guidance Association (AEGA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Establishment of the National Qualification Authority of Ireland (NQAI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Phase 3 of AEGI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Department of Enterprise, Training &amp; Employment (DETE) <em>Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Establishment of Interdepartmental Committee on Lifelong Learning (DES &amp; DETE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>NQAI <em>National Framework of Qualifications</em> published</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Irish EU Presidency Conference on <em>Lifelong Guidance: Harmonising Policy and Practice</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Establishment of Irish National Guidance Forum (NGF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>DETE <em>National Employment Action Plan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Formative Evaluation of Phases 1-3 of AEGI conducted by SPSS, Ireland Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Phase 4 of AEGI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>AEGI’s total number of nationwide services stands at 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 - 2009</td>
<td>Summative evaluation of AEGI carried out by the NCGE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7: IAEVG Conference Report

Report by Jennifer Liston and Tom Geary

RE: Attendance at the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) Conference 3-5 June 2009

Conference Title; Coherence, Co-operation and Quality in Guidance and Counselling

Background

The Conference was organized by the University of Jyväskylä in co-operation with the Finnish Ministry of Education and the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

The focus in this conference was on guidance as a systemic entity which takes into account the services visible to users and the mechanisms behind the planning and managing those services in order to enhance congruence between strategic planning and the implementation of guidance and counselling services. In this framework guidance can be seen as a chain of services and the responsibility of jointly shared by multiple providers. The importance of service networks and networking as a developmental activity was addressed.

The planning, development and implementation of guidance and counselling services can be described in different layers or dimensions: The policy development dimension includes the policy and legislation that shapes guidance services in different settings. The contextual dimension is concerned with the networks in which services are developed and offered, including regional situations, educational and community settings, as well as socio-economic and work life structures that surround the people seeking guidance services. The organisational dimension focuses on the context for guidance service delivery from the organisational perspective, and includes inter-professional collaboration to provide transparent and seamless services to clients. This dimension includes the development of guidance services within organizations. The content and methodological dimension is concerned with the development and implementation of practices designed to meet the needs of different client groups and to promote autonomy and career management skills in the context of lifelong learning.

The conference program was organized according to the four dimensions mentioned above. The conference consisted of Keynote lectures, parallel thematic seminars, presentation sessions, and poster sessions.
Keynote Lectures Attended

Professor James P. Sampson, Florida State University, USA Translating Career Theory to Practice: The Risk of Unintentional Social Injustice

Professor Risto Eräsaari, University of Helsinki, Finland Dynamic confrontations with connections and justifications? Thoughts on the new welfare state imaginary

Professor Nancy Arthur, University of Calgary, Canada Coherence, Co-operation and Quality in Guidance and Counselling: Strengthening our Foundation of Diversity and Social Justice

Thematic Seminars & Presentation Sessions Attended;

Some of the sessions attended included;
‘Engaging disengaged young people in a multicultural context’
‘Life Design, A paradigm for Career construction in the 21st century’
‘Evaluation of guidance and counselling’
‘CEDEFOP session on European policy initiatives’
‘Workplace Guidance’

Participants Presentation

We presented under the heading of Guidance Policy. The presentation was extremely relevant to the context of the conference. Attendance at our presentation was high showing an interest in the research we are undertaking. Two past presidents of the IAEVG, a representative from the National Centre for Guidance Education (Ireland) and course directors from the UK and Sweden were among the audience for the presentation. Following a twenty minute PowerPoint presentation on the complexity of implementing a guidance counsellor education programme ten minutes of questions took place.

Feedback

The presentation was received extremely well and many wished us well with the remaining phases of the research. There was an expression of interest in the questionnaire findings. Possible areas to be considered following particular questions include the researches consideration and impact on current programme participants, the need to look at the questionnaire findings relative to the participant’s year of study and the need to look at the feelings of over or under qualification of graduates.
Significance of Conference to Research;

The conference has been extremely beneficial to the research as it has reinforced the researchers motivation for the need for such a study even further. Attendance at the conference has also meant that the researcher has gained much confidence in her supervision as throughout the conference week it was evident that the research is in tune with current developments at both a national and international level and also original in its focus on the personal narrative of the course director. Many contacts have been gained in the area of guidance and counselling which will be utilised to further enhance the research. From presentations attended particular areas such as evaluation frameworks, clients needs and international policy will be explored further for the research.

Significance of Conference to Education and Professional Studies Department;

Attendance at the IAEVG conference has added to the professional development of both participants. The conference was an opportunity to present research from the department in the area of guidance and counselling. The knowledge gained on areas of multi-cultural guidance, guidance policy and group counselling are some examples of knowledge which will be transmitted by the course director of the graduate diploma in guidance and counselling to the programme and also in the development of the master programme.
Appendix 8: Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
O L L S C O I L  L U I M N I G H

My name is Jennifer Liston and I am a full-time research postgraduate student at the University of Limerick. The research I am undertaking is exploring the effectiveness of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance counselling and it is supervised by Mr. Tom Geary. Tom Geary and I would like to invite you to give some valuable feedback on a number of topics relating to the Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling which you participated in.

The results of this survey will not identify individual participants in any way.

The questionnaire is divided into five sections. Please complete all questions.

Upon completion of the questionnaire, fill in the final page, detach it from the questionnaire and place it in the white envelope provided and post. Or alternatively contact me, Jennifer Liston, at 061-233660/ 087-9440685 or Email; Jennifer.Liston@ul.ie.

Place the completed questionnaire in the large A4 brown envelope and post.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this research, it is greatly appreciated.
Please tick correct answer box  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 1; Personal Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Gender: M ☐ F ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Age Group:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25yrs ☐ 26-30 yrs ☐ 31-35 yrs ☐ 36-40 yrs ☐ 41-45 yrs ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50 yrs ☐ 51-55 yrs ☐ 56-60 yrs ☐ 61-65 yrs ☐ 65+yrs ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. Please indicate the location and year that you participated in the Graduate Diploma of Guidance and Counselling:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limerick 1997-1999 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limerick 1998-2000 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre 1998-2000 ☐ *started Feb 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre 1998-2000 ☐ *started Sept 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limerick 1999-2001 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre 1999-2001 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limerick 2000-2002 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin West Education Centre 2000-2002 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre 2001-2003 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin West Education Centre 2003-2005 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry Education Service, VEC 2003-2005 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limerick 2003-2005 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Limerick 2005-2007 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrick-on-Shannon Education Centre 2005-2007 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4. How many times did you apply for the programme?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5+ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q5. On which application were you accepted?

1st □  2nd □  3rd □  4th □  5+ □

Q6. Do you feel you had sufficient information about the programme at the application stage?

YES □    NO □

Q7. (a) Did you self-fund your participation in the programme?

YES □    NO □

(b) If no, where did you receive the funds from?

______________________________________________________________

Q8. (a) Please indicate the reasons that attracted you to the UL programme? (tick the box next to the relevant statements)

The location of the programme. □

The part-time aspect of the programme. □

The focus of the programme on personal counselling □

I wanted a total career change □

I wanted to move away from the classroom □

I wanted to add to my C.V. □

I recognised the need/demand for guidance counsellors □

I wanted to enhance my pastoral role in school □

I wanted to address the needs of pupils □

I wanted to address my own self development needs □

I was encouraged by my principal □
Appendices

I overcame many personal issues and I felt this puts me in a good position to help others □

I was practicing as a guidance counsellor and wanted a recognised qualification □

I wanted to enhance my role as a co-ordinator of TY/LCVP etc. □

I wanted to move out of a school setting and set up consultancy. □

Q8. (b) Please comment on any other reasons that attracted you to the UL programme other than those listed above?

______________________________________________________________

Section 2; Career Path

Q9. Please state your degree title?

_____________________________________________________________________________

Q10. (a) Before you undertook the UL Programme what was your occupation?

_____________________________________________________________________________

   (b) If your occupation was a teacher, what subject areas did you teach?

_____________________________________________________________________________

Q11. How many years did you work in your occupation before undertaking the UL programme?

   0-2 years □   3-5 years □   6-11 years □   12-17 years □   18-23 years □

   24-29 years □ 30-35 years □ 36-41 years □ 41+ years □

Q12. Are you presently working in the same occupation?

YES □   NO □

273
Q13. (a) Are you presently employed as a guidance counsellor?

YES □       NO □

(b) If Yes, how many hours a week, are you working as a guidance counsellor?

_____ hrs

(c) If No, what is your current occupational status?

Q14. (a) Please tick ‘I am’, ‘I am not’ or ‘I have been’.

Since the completion of the UL programme......

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... second level education guidance counsellor

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... adult education guidance counsellor

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... third level education guidance counsellor

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... principal

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... deputy principal

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... a year head

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... curriculum co-ordinator

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... resource teacher

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... home school liaison officer

I am □ I am not □ I have been □ employed as a.... self employed guidance counsellor
Appendices

(b) If you are currently employed in another occupation or if you have been employed in other occupations since the completion of the UL programme please specify;

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Section 3; Your Impact on Guidance Counselling Services

Using a four point Likert Scale, please circle the number that best reflects the guidance counselling approach you subscribe to in your.....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) Current practise? (current role)</th>
<th>(b) Preferred practise? ( ideal role)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1= most often,</td>
<td>1= most preferred,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2= quite often,</td>
<td>2= quite preferred,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3= half of time,</td>
<td>3= preferred on average,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4= least often,</td>
<td>4 = least preferred,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5= never</td>
<td>5= not preferred at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q15. Providing a Counselling Service

(a) In my current role (b) In my ideal role

1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

Q16. Providing Developmental Programmes

(a) In my current role (b) In my ideal role

1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

Q17. Providing a Consultation Service

(a) In my current role (b) In my ideal role

1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
### Q18. Providing an Information Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Current Role</th>
<th>Ideal Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q19. Providing Preparation for Working Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Current Role</th>
<th>Ideal Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q20. Providing a Referral Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Current Role</th>
<th>Ideal Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q21. Providing an Assessment Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Current Role</th>
<th>Ideal Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Q22. Participating in Continuing Professional Development Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Current Role</th>
<th>Ideal Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Section 4: Continuing Professional Development (CPD*) Needs**

Q23. (a) Have you undertaken any further formal education following your completion of the UL programme?

YES □  NO □

(b) If yes, please indicate the course name and why you participated in this further education?

____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

Q24. (a) Are you a member of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors?

YES □  NO □

(b) If yes, please indicate the branch you are a member of and comment on the CPD* provided by your local branch of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.

____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
Q25. CPD programmes which relate to guidance counselling can be listed under five different headings. Please indicate what statements refer to your experience of each of the headings.

(a). Information Technology related CPD

I have participated in CPD programmes in this area.  

NO □

I would like to participate in CPD in this area but I have not had the opportunity.  

NO □

I am not interested in CPD in this area.  

NO □

(b). CPD which relates to the Professional Role of the Guidance Counsellor

I have participated in CPD programmes in this area.  

NO □

I would like to participate in CPD in this area but I have not had the opportunity.  

NO □

I am not interested in CPD in this area.  

NO □

(c). CPD to enhance the Counselling Relationship

I have participated in CPD programmes in this area.  

NO □

I would like to participate in CPD in this area but I have not had the opportunity.  

NO □
I am not interested in CPD in this area.  
YES □  
NO □  

(d). CPD which deals with **Current Issues** for example substance misuse  
I have participated in CPD programmes in this area.  
YES □  
NO □  
I would like to participate in CPD in this area but I have not had the opportunity.  
YES □  
NO □  
I am not interested in CPD in this area.  
YES □  
NO □  

(e) **Managing/Planning** related CPD  
I have participated in CPD programmes in this area.  
YES □  
NO □  
I would like to participate in CPD in this area but I have not had the opportunity.  
YES □  
NO □  
I am not interested in CPD in this area.  
YES □  
NO □  

(f) Are there any other CPD programmes which you have participated in or would like to participate in which do not fit into the above categories?  
_____________________________________________________________________________  
_____________________________________________________________________________  
_____________________________________________________________________________
Q26. (a) In your experience CPD programmes which relate to guidance and counselling are mostly run by? Please rate the following out of 1 to 4, with 1=mostly, 2=sometimes, 3=least often, 4=never

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors ☐
The Health Board ☐
The Department of Education ☐
Or Other ☐

(b) Please indicate other bodies which have run CPD programmes that you are aware of;

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Q27. (a) Do you feel that there are enough opportunities for guidance counsellors to seek CPD?

YES ☐    NO ☐    UNSURE ☐

(b) Why?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Q28. (a) Do you think CPD should be accredited?

YES ☐    NO ☐    UNSURE ☐

(b) Why?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________


Section 5; General Information

Q29. The design of the UL course and the selection of syllabus content were strongly influenced by the guidelines which were issued by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.

In light of this, to what extent did the design of the UL programme meet your expectations?

(Please circle one number)

1= Totally met  2= Met to a large extent  3= Met on average  4= Met slightly  5= Not met at all

1 2 3 4 5

Q30. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors also sets down prescribed areas of coverage with minimum contact requirements in order for graduates of a training course to be eligible for professional recognition as Guidance Counsellors.

In light of this, to what extent did the design of the UL programme meet your expectations?

(Please circle one number)

1= Totally met  2= Met to a large extent  3= Met on average  4= Met slightly  5= Not met at all

1 2 3 4 5

Finally, please comment on your experience of the UL programme. (All comments welcome)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire; it is very much appreciated.

Place the completed questionnaire in the brown envelope provided and post.
Appendix 9: Subject Information Sheet

Title of Project: An exploration of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance counselling.

The Graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling at the University of Limerick is in operation just over ten years. This research explores the programme to ensure its effectiveness in providing quality graduates to practice as Guidance Counsellors in the Secondary School Education System and Adult Guidance. At the National Guidance Forum (2007) the ‘Guidance for Life’ report was launched. In this report it suggests areas to improve Guidance Services. One such suggestion it lists is to,

Ensure that people working in guidance are well-trained and supported, with proper quality assurance procedures in place. (2007; 34)

With the above in mind it is intended to research the UL programme for the benefit of both existing graduates of the programme and future participants of the programme. The following areas will be examined in the research,

- The reasons underpinning the high demand by teachers applying and wishing to study this programme.
- The career paths of graduates of the UL programme.
- The impact of UL guidance and counselling graduates on Post Primary Education and Adult Guidance.
- The Continuing Professional Development needs of these graduates.

These areas will be examined by sending a questionnaire to every past graduate of the UL programme. Following the questionnaire participants may volunteer to participate in a focus group and a semi-structured interview. By examining these areas it is hoped to highlight the strengths of the programme and its graduates and also enhance the programme by considering the results of the research.

A minor risk which may be foreseen would be that the personal development you experienced while participating in the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance and counselling may be addressed. This may re-raise feelings regarding personal development which may have been difficult to deal with at the time. However procedures have been put in place to deal with the above should it occur. The results of the research study may be published but no reference to the participant or the school will be made. The information which you volunteer will be held in complete anonymity.
and confidentiality. Participation is not obligatory and you can withdraw at any time. Should you have any questions concerning the research study or participation in it, before or after consent, please use the following contact numbers,

Jennifer Liston  
Research Postgraduate,  
Department of Education and Professional Studies,  
FG145 Foundation Building,  
University of Limerick.

Phone; 061-233660  
Email: Jennifer.liston@ul.ie

Tom Geary  
Department of Education and Professional Studies,  
University of Limerick.

Phone; 061-202701  
Email: Tom.Geary@ul.ie

Or if you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact;

The Chairman of the University of Limerick Research Ethics Committee,  
c/o Vice President Academic and Registrar's Office  
University of Limerick,  
Limerick

Tel: (061) 202022.
Appendix 10: Subject Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Subject Consent Form;

Title of Project: An exploration of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance counselling.

I consent to involvement in this research project having read the subject information sheet. I am fully aware of all the procedures involving myself, and of the risks and benefits associated with the study. I know that participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.

Name: (please print): ________________________________________

Signed: ___________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________________________
Appendix 11: Research Code of Ethics

National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)

Research Code of Ethics
July 2008

NCGE as an agency of the Department of Education and Science is aware of its responsibility as a state agency to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct and practice in relation to its research activities. It is for this reason that NCGE has sought the permission of the PSI to use its Code of Professional Ethics in a guidance context. The NCGE Research Code of Ethics (2008) replaces all earlier versions. This document has been prepared by NCGE to guide it in relation to ethical issues that may arise in the course of its research activities. These ethics will apply to all NCGE staff and consultants undertaking research on behalf of NCGE; to members of committees/boards and steering groups convened by NCGE to provide assistance in relation to its research activities; and to guidance counsellors/participants enrolled on NCGE programmes (to be referred to as clients of NCGE). To promote ethical conduct in relation to its research activities NCGE and its clients (outlined above) are required to consult and engage with this document throughout the research process. If a client encounters an ethical issue she/he should consult this document in the first instance and then contact NCGE if necessary.

SUMMARY OF THE CODE
The code consists of four overall ethical principles which include a number of specific ethical standards.
1. Respect for the Rights and Dignity of the Person
2. Competence
3. Responsibility
4. Integrity

RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF THE PERSON
NCGE and its clients shall promote and honour the rights, dignity and worth of all its stakeholders and those of its research participants. NCGE and its clients shall respect the rights of stakeholders and research participants to privacy, confidentiality, self determination and autonomy, consistent with its professional obligations and within the law. NCGE and its clients will ensure that the research process is cognisant of diverse populations and allows for the protection of vulnerable groups.

NCGE and its clients shall,
A. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
• Explore and collect only that information which is germane to the purposes of a given investigation or intervention.
• Take care not to infringe, in research or service activities, on the personally or culturally defined private space of stakeholders and research participants unless clear and appropriate permission is granted to do so.
• Take care not to relay, except as required or justified by law, confidential information about others (i.e. stakeholders and research participants) to which it has become privy in the course of research.

• Share confidential information with others only with the informed consent of those involved, or in a manner that the individuals involved cannot be identified, except as required or justified by law.

• Store, handle, transfer and dispose of all records, both written and unwritten (for example, computer files, video tapes), in a way that attends to the needs for privacy and security and which is in accordance with the law.

• Take all reasonable steps to ensure that records and data obtained through research remain personally identifiable only as long as is necessary in the interests of those to whom the records refer and/or to the research project for which they were collected, or as required by law, and render anonymous or destroy any records that no longer need to be personally identifiable.

• Be acutely aware of the need for discretion in the collection, recording and communication of information (in the course of research), so as to prevent it from being interpreted or used to the detriment of others. Appropriate action includes, but is not limited to: not collecting or recording information which could lead to misinterpretation and misuse; avoiding conjecture; clearly labelling opinion; and, communicating information in language that can be understood clearly by the particular recipient of the information.

• Inform those to whom services are offered about legal limits on confidentiality where it is appropriate to do so.

• Indicate the measures that will be taken to protect the confidentiality of research participants in group settings including informing members of the risk of disclosure outside of the group by participants.

B. INFORMED CONSENT AND FREEDOM OF CONSENT

• View informed consent not just as the signing of a consent form, but as the outcome of a process (commencing prior to the research and continuing until the participant is no longer involved in the research) of agreeing to work collaboratively.

• Ensure, in the process of obtaining informed consent, that at least the following points are understood: purpose and nature of the activity; mutual responsibilities; likely benefits and risks; data management, alternatives; the likely consequences of non-action; the option to refuse or withdraw at any time, without prejudice; over what period of time the consent applies; and, how to rescind consent if desired. Special measures should be employed in the case of vulnerable groups (see below).

• Take all reasonable steps to ensure that consent to participate in research is not given under conditions of coercion or undue pressure. The research process must take into account the impact of unequal relationships on the individual’s ability to consent i.e. teacher-student, counsellor-client and, employer-employee relationships for instance, and steps must be taken to ensure that an individual does not feel coerced to participate in the research.

• Obtain informed consent for all research activities which involve obtrusive measures, invasion into the private lives of research participants, risks to the participant, or any attempt to change the behaviour of research participants. Any research that involves obtrusive measures should be referred to the NCGE Management Committee prior to the research proceeding.

• Seek willing and adequately informed participation from any person of diminished capacity to give informed consent (see vulnerable groups below), and proceed without
this consent only if the research activity is considered to be of direct benefit to that
person. Please note that research of this nature should be referred to the NCGE
Management Committee.

• Carry out informed consent processes with those persons who are legally responsible
or appointed to give informed consent on behalf of individuals who are not competent to
give consent on their own behalf (see vulnerable groups).

• Do not use persons of diminished capacity to give informed consent in research
studies, if the research involved might equally well be carried out with persons who
have a fuller capacity to give informed consent.

• Seek an independent and adequate ethical review of human rights issues and
protections for any research involving vulnerable groups and/or persons of diminished
capacity to give informed consent, before making a decision to proceed. This review
should be undertaken by the NCGE Management Committee.

• Ensure that information is revealed only with the research participant’s consent, except
when subject to the requirements of law or where concealment would result in danger to
the participant or others.

• Discuss data on individuals only for professional purposes, and only with those who
are clearly entitled to know or be consulted.

• Publish information about, or quotes from, research participants, in oral or written
form, only with their consent, or where their identity is adequately disguised.

• Make audio, video or photographic records of stakeholders/research participants only
where these persons have given prior agreement to the making of the record and the
conditions of subsequent access. This clause does not apply to the recording of public
behaviour or research situations where other ethical safeguards have been implemented.

• Clarify to all concerned the nature of their loyalties in cases of conflict of interest.

• Clarify the nature of any multiple relationships to all concerned parties
before
obtaining consent, if research is at the behest of third parties (which may include
government agencies and special funding bodies). The clarification includes, but is not
limited to, the following information: the purpose of the service or research; the use that
will be made of information collected; and the limits on confidentiality.

• Obtain the research participant’s consent to the attendance of trainees and other third
parties not directly involved in the provision of the research.

C. SELF-DETERMINATION

• Respect the rights of research participants and others to safeguard their own dignity.

• Respect the right of individuals to discontinue participation in research at any time,
and be responsive to non-verbal indications of a desire to discontinue if individuals have
difficulty in verbally communicating such a desire.

Vulnerable Groups

Vulnerable groups refer to people who are not legally able to give informed consent due
to age or incompetence. For the purposes of this document vulnerable groups will
include, those under the age of 18, certain groups of elderly people, persons who have
an intellectual or mental impairment, and/or mental health difficulties, persons who are
incarcerated, and minority groups such as non Irish nationals.

Research with vulnerable groups should only take place if the following conditions have
been established and addressed:

• The research will contribute to the well being of the group.

• The group can provide only the information required.

• The research methodology is appropriate to the group.
• The research process and conditions provide for the emotional, psychological and physical safety of the group.
• The requirements under legislation protecting the population have been fulfilled.
• The research has been explained in a way that is accessible to the group i.e. the researcher should ensure that the language employed and that the medium of communication are accessible i.e. the presence of an advocate, interpreter or translator if required. With regard to those under the age of 18, certain groups of elderly people and persons with disabilities the following shall also apply:
• Consent to participate in the research is sought from a parent/guardian/ proxy (as appropriate) prior to approaching the individual/group.

Competence
NCGE and its clients shall strive to ensure and maintain high standards of competence in their work. The boundaries of competencies and the limitations of expertise should be recognised. NCGE and its clients shall only engage in research for which they are qualified to do.
In the case where NCGE or its clients are insufficiently qualified to undertake research the advice of experts will be sought and the services of a highly qualified and experienced researcher be employed.

NCGE and its clients shall,

A. ETHICAL AWARENESS
• Avoid entering into research agreements or contracts which might oblige them to contravene provisions of NCGE’s Research Code of Ethics.

B. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
• Keep up to date with relevant knowledge, research methods, and techniques, through the reading of relevant literature, peer consultation, and continuing education activities, in order that research activities and conclusions shall benefit and not harm others.

Responsibility
NCGE and its clients will be aware of their professional responsibilities to stakeholders, including research participants. They shall avoid doing harm.

NCGE and its clients shall,

A. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY
• Be sensitive to the needs, current issues, and problems of society when determining research questions to be asked, services to be developed, information to be collected, or the interpretation of results/findings.
• Protect the dignity and wellbeing of research participants at all times.
• Maintain records of research data for an appropriate period of time and ensure that these are stored according to the provisions of legislation in this area. NCGE staff and consultants undertaking research on NCGE’s behalf will return all research data to NCGE.

B. PROMOTION OF HIGH STANDARDS
• Ensure that the highest standards of integrity are maintained.
C. AVOIDANCE OF HARM
• Will be sensitive to, and knowledgeable about, individual differences and vulnerabilities to discern what will benefit and not harm persons involved in research activities.
• Not contribute to, nor engage in, research which promotes or is intended for use in deliberate impairment of an individual's psychological integrity.
• Act to minimise the impact of research activities on research participants' personality or their mental or physical integrity.
• Screen research participants and select those not likely to be harmed, if risk or harm to some research participants is possible.
• Debrief research participants in such a way that any harm caused can be discerned, and act to correct any resultant harm.
• Not disadvantage participants (individuals, groups, families or communities) by offering them no service over an unreasonable period of time in order to fulfil a control condition in a research study; where a study reveals beneficial effects, and resources allow.
• Seek an independent and adequate ethical review of the balance of risks and potential benefits of all research which involves procedures of unknown consequence, or where pain, discomfort, or harm are possible, before making a decision to proceed.
• Exercise particular care when reporting results on vulnerable groups to counter misinterpretation or misuse in the development of policy, attitudes, or practices (for example, manipulation of vulnerable persons or discrimination against specific populations).

D. EXTENDED RESPONSIBILITY
• Guard against the misuse or misinterpretation by others of psychological data.

E. RESOLVING DILEMMAS
• Use a systematic procedure for investigating ethical issues and resolving ethical dilemmas. A recommended procedure is presented in Appendix A, and a categorisation of affected/interested parties (stakeholders) in Appendix B.
• Inform all parties, if a real or potential conflict of interest arises, of the need to resolve the situation in a manner that is consistent with this Research Code of Ethics, and take all reasonable steps to resolve it.

Integrity
NCGE and its clients shall seek to promote integrity in the undertaking of its research.

NCGE and its clients shall,

A. HONESTY AND ACCURACY
• Take care in communicating knowledge, findings and views to clearly differentiate facts, opinions, theories, hypotheses, and ideas.
• Not suppress disconfirming evidence of findings and views, and acknowledge alternative hypotheses and explanations.
• Conduct research in a way that is consistent with a commitment to honest, open inquiry, and to clear communication of any research aims, sponsorship, social context, personal values, or financial interests that may affect or appear to affect the research.
• Ensure that those who commission research are aware of the rights and responsibilities of all interested parties.
• Clarify ownership of documentation, data, and rights of publication with those to which it has commissioned research.
• Give publication credit to others (as appropriate) in proportion to the professional contribution that they have made. Publication includes all forms of media. Professional contributions include but are not limited to: ideas generated, execution of research, analysis of results, and writing.

B. STRAIGHTFORWARDNESS AND OPENNESS
• Respect the right of research participants to receive an appropriate explanation of the nature, purpose and results of investigations, assessments and research findings, in language that these persons can understand.
• Be clear and straightforward about all information needed to establish informed consent or any other valid written or unwritten agreement (for example: concerns; mutual responsibilities; ethical responsibilities; purpose and nature of the relationship; alternatives; likely experiences; possible conflicts; possible outcomes; and, expectations for processing, using, and sharing any information generated).
• Avoid using deception (or techniques which might be interpreted as deception) in research or service activities if there are alternative procedures available or if negative effects cannot be predicted or offset.
• Seek an independent ethical review of the risks to public or individual trust and of safeguards to protect such trust for any research which uses deception or techniques which might be interpreted as deception, before making a decision to proceed.
• Provide a debriefing for research participants following studies in which deception (or the use of techniques which could be interpreted as deception) has occurred. The real nature of, and rationale for, the study will be clarified.

C. CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AND EXPLOITATION
• Not exploit any professional relationship to further personal, political or business interests.
• Be acutely aware of the problematic nature of dual relationships and recognise that it is not always possible to avoid them. Where it is possible, avoid such relationships; where it is not, steps should be taken to safeguard research participants’ interests.
Appendix 12: Ethical Approval

UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Faculty of Education & Health Sciences
Department of Education & Professional Studies
Phone: (061) 202701 Fax: (061) 331673 email: Tom.Geary@ul.ie

3rd April 2008

Mr Tom Geary/Jennifer Liston
Department of Education & Professional Studies
EHS
U.L

Dear Tom

Jennifer Liston: An Exploration of the UL Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling.

The Ethics Committee, at its meeting on 2nd April 2008, granted full approval for the above proposal.

Yours sincerely

Professor Marie Parker-Jenkins
Acting Chair
Department of Education & Professional Studies
Ethics Sub-Committee
Appendix 13: Interview Subject Information Sheet

Title of Project; An evaluation of the effectiveness of the University of Limerick Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling.

The Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling at the University of Limerick is in operation just over ten years. This research explores the programme to ensure its effectiveness in providing quality graduates to practice as Guidance Counsellors in the secondary school education system and in adult guidance settings. At the National Guidance Forum (2007) the ‘Guidance for Life’ report was launched. In this report it suggests areas to improve Guidance Services. One area it highlights is to,

Ensure that people working in guidance are well-trained and supported, with proper quality assurance procedures in place. (2007; 34)

It is intended to research the UL programme for the benefit of both existing graduates of the programme and future participants of the programme. The following areas will be examined in the research,

- The reasons underpinning the high demand by teachers applying and wishing to study this programme.
- Perceptions of the learning environment created during the programme.
- The career paths of graduates.
- The Continuing Professional Development needs of these graduates.

By examining these areas it is hoped to highlight the strengths of the programme and its graduates and also enhance the programme by considering the results of the research. In addition a more effective model for guidance counsellor education will be generated if necessary.

The results of the research study may be published but no reference to the participant will be made. The information which you volunteer will be held in complete anonymity and confidentiality. Participation is not obligatory and you can withdraw at any time. Should you have any questions concerning the research study or participation in it, before or after consent, please use the following contact numbers,

Jennifer Liston
Research Postgraduate,
Department of Education and Professional Studies,

Prof. Marie Parker Jenkins
Professor of Education,
Department of Education and Professional Studies,
FG145 Foundation Building, University of Limerick.
Phone; 061-233660
Email; jennifer.liston@ul.ie

CM074 Main Building, University of Limerick.
Phone; 061-234693
Email; marie.parker.jenkins@ul.ie

Or if you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact;

The Chairman of the University of Limerick Research Ethics Committee,
c/o Vice President Academic and Registrar's Office
University of Limerick,
Limerick
Tel: (061) 202022.
Appendix 14: Subject Consent Form

Title of Project; An evaluation of the effectiveness of the University of Limerick Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling.

I consent to involvement in this research project having read the subject information sheet. I know that participation is voluntary, anonymous and I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.

Name: (please print): ____________________________________________

Signed: ________________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________________
Appendix 15: Interview Schedule

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and completing the consent form in order to take part in this interview. Once again I would like to reassure you that the information which you volunteer today will be held in complete anonymity and confidentiality. During this interview I wish to explore further the main themes which emerged from the questionnaires. As this is a pilot interview your comments with regards to the clarity of the questions is welcomed. At the end of the interview I will ask you to make these comments.

PART 1; THEME; PERSONAL BACKGROUND/ PHILOSOPHY

What were your reasons for doing the programme?

What role were you in before taking part in the course?

Do you feel teaching experience is necessary to become a guidance counsellor?

What does it mean to you to be a success as a Guidance Counsellor?

Is it important to be an altruistic, helping, genuine, empathic etc.
Part 2; Theme; Exploring Current Role and Role Identity.

What is your current role?

Possible titles: guidance counselling, educational guidance, vocational guidance, career guidance, career counselling’

If guidance counsellor- Do you feel your role is appropriately titled ‘guidance counsellor’?

or you referred to yourself as a _____________ why?

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors describes how the Guidance Counsellor is professionally educated, at post-graduate level, to provide for the “personal and social, educational and vocational development of the young people”. Do you feel appropriately educated and professionally prepared in terms of knowledge/skills and attitudes to provide these areas of guidance counselling?

Introduce Prompt sheet 1;

Discuss which areas you feel are most important …… which areas did the program prepare you for?

Did the balance of the programme contents meet the balance in reality?

Do you feel the UL programme could help you balance the complexity of your role, e.g management skills, self care, collaboration

Part 3; Theme; Learning Process and Assessment

When and where you completed the programme?

If outreach – How did you find the learning experience off-campus?

If on campus - How did you find the learning experience on-campus?

Did you feel the programme was well organised and administered?

Would you have any recommendations as to how this can be improved?

How did you find the part-time aspect of the programme?

Reactions to the course and specific modules; Which elements of the programme did you enjoy participating in? which did you find useful? Which elements of the programme did you not enjoy participating in? which did you find unhelpful?

Use Prompt sheet 2;

Can you comment on your perceptions of the course or specific modules/learning environment before undertaking the programme?
Which aspects of the course did you find easy/difficult?

Can you reflect on the learning outcomes from the course or modules for you?

Can you reflect on the impact of teaching and learning strategies/ methodologies?

Did certain elements of the course/ modules motivate you more than others?

Did certain personnel/lecturers motivate you more than others?

Do you think there were any other dimensions which aided learning such as, the group dynamic, being part of a community of learners, social networking, feeling safe within the group, relationships…. How important was this for you? Can you suggest any other dimensions?

Did you feel over or under assessed when completing the programme?

**Part 4; Theme; Continuous Professional Development Needs and Impact of the Programme**

Overall what has been the impact of the Guidance Counselling programme on your life both professionally and personally?

Have your needs as a guidance counsellor changed since you completed the programme?

What is needed within the programme that is not there already?

Is there any way the programme can support you in the early stages (induction phase) of your role.

**Part 5; Theme; Programme Evaluation**

Are there new/emerging issues in the area of guidance counselling which the programme needs to include.

Would you recommend the programme?

If you could give a piece of advice to the director of the programme about how to improve the programme, what would that be? Or If the programme was being reviewed what suggestion would you make to the reviewer?

**Conclusion**

Thank you very much for helping this research and giving your time. Can I finally ask you if you think there is any aspect of your experience of the University of Limerick graduate diploma in guidance counselling which you feel is important to discuss and has not been covered during this interview. Thank you very much for helping this research and giving your time. I look forward to sending you a summary of what we have discussed in order to ensure I have interpreted your comments correctly.
Appendix 16: Interview Topics Prompt Sheet

Part 1; Theme; Personal Background/ Philosophy

An input factor into any learning programme is the participants reason for attending the programme. Why you choose to participate in a programme can greatly affect the learning that occurs. Guidance counsellors have been described as caring, helping people (Hamblin, Ryan). Are these the characteristics that judge success as a guidance counsellor.

Part 2; Theme; Exploring Current Role and Role Identity.

The role of the guidance counsellor is extensive and described frequently in literature. However knowing the current role of the graduates from the UL programme will help the directors prepare future graduates. The service guidance counsellors provide as been described as varied (McCoy). Exploring role identity may highlight any issues surrounding role identity.

Part 3; Theme; Learning Process and Assessment

In order to improve learning the positive and/or negative factors which exist during the learning process must be identified. Assessment can also promote and inhibit learning depending on how it is utilized.

Part 4; Theme; Continuous Professional Development Needs and Impact of the Programme

Ascertaining continuous professional development needs will help inform course directors and professional bodies as too the learning needs which may need to be facilitated. The impact of the programme is important to identify in order to ensure the programme is meeting its objectives.

Part 5; Theme; Programme Evaluation

An overall evaluation is required in order to respond to the overall research question.

Conclusion
Appendix 17: Pilot Interview Comments Sheet

Can you please comment on;

The clarity of the questions?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

The language used?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

The length of the interview?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

The flow of the interview?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

The appropriateness of the questions?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

The use of the visual prompts?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Have you any suggestions which may improve this interview…

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________