COUNSELLING IN ADULT EDUCATION

MODULE 1 - BOOKLET

INTRODUCTION – GENERAL ASPECTS
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INTRODUCTION – GENERAL ASPECTS

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General Introduction

Aiming to go beyond the national specificity of the partner countries and to provide a feasible material all across Europe, “Continuing Education Designed for Counsellors Working in Adult Education” – ACCED, project number 225646-CP-1-2005-1-RO-GRUNTDEVIG-G1.1, adopted the same competency framework developed within the DPPC project – “The Development of Psycho-pedagogical and Professional Counselling Services”. This framework was used for developing and providing a structured Training package, contributing in this way at the compatibilisation of the counsellors’ education and training.

The project aim was to offer a coherent training course, compatible at the European level, designed for career counsellors/practitioners working in adult education (AE) institutions.

The main project objectives were:
- To design the training course concept;
- To develop useful didactical materials/resources (Training package);
- To test the outputs for validating and improving them;
- To provide two Grundtvig 3 courses for all professionals interested at national and European level;
- To disseminate and exploit the ACCED products at European level.

The direct beneficiaries of the outputs are the career counsellors/other staff working in AE institutions/counsellors’ trainers or other adults that are trying to improve their professional development. The ultimate target group will be all adult learners, particularly unemployed people over 40 and young job seekers (16-25 years old) at risk of social marginalisation.

The didactical approach used in elaboration of the Training package was based on the principles of linking theory with practice, respecting the principles of the constructivist approach on learning at adult age, of providing examples of good practice. The Training package was designed in an attractive, interactive, practice oriented way, helping
the practitioners to find solutions for concrete job situations, to reflect on their own experience and practice, to learn by doing etc.

The Training package consists in 6 booklets and a Trainer’s guide. The 6 didactical booklets/course supports (one for every training course module) were designed on the base of the DPPC products. More concretely, the two main outputs of the DPPC project were elaborated on the modular principle. The Training materials from DPPC were further developed, more detailed, aiming only the practical part of the training: practical activities, study cases, examples of good practice, designed for developing specific counselling competencies etc.

The trainer’s guide, designed to be used by the teachers and trainers who will provide the training course, include various suggestions for raising the efficiency of the teaching activities, reflection points, evaluation tools for trainers and teachers.

The Training package is a complex training tool, the booklets being complemented by the Trainer’s guide that gives the trainers methodological hints for putting into practice the explained activities. Designed in a modular perspective, the Training package could be used selectively regarding the development of a specific competence in counselling.

All information about the Training package can also be found (on line version) at http://acced.europroject.org. The tools should not be used without the copyrights or the acknowledgements of the authors.

We hope you will find this Training package useful in your professional field we are looking forward to receive your advised feedback after using it in training sessions for validating the materials and gaining credibility and sustainability of the Training package.

IREA
The ACCED Booklets, as well as the training material on career counselling, were developed as part of the ACCED project, which aimed at ensuring an educational provision for career practitioners and people who want to work in that field respectively. While the Trainer's Guide is directed especially to the Trainer of the training process, the Booklets are tools created as complement material for the learners and give specific information and instructions for the development of the activities.

As a complement to the ACCED trainer's guide you will find six booklets that contain the practical part of the training and the detailed explanation of the activities that complement the theory. Every booklet refers to a specific Module of ACCED Trainer's Guide, Module 1 to 6, and follows the same themes and structure as the theoretical part, which is to say:

Module 1 - Introduction, General Aspects
Module 2 - Professional Behaviour
Module 3 - Interpersonal competencies
Module 4 - Facilitating Individual and Group Learning
Module 5 - Career Counselling
Module 6 - Information and Resource Management

Booklet 1 has a structure that is different from the others and consists in a more theoretical definition of key concepts and theoretical approaches on counselling as well as a bibliography that complement Trainer's Guide First part. Booklet 2 to Booklet 6 follow a same structure that consists of:

* a General Introduction that details the specific objectives and competences of the Module;
* a part dedicated to the activities in which for each activity the duration; description, procedure and complementary worksheet(s) (optional) are presented;
* a part dedicated to case studies adapted to the specificity of the Module's theme;
* a part that contains articles related to the Module's theme;
The activities proposed in the Booklets are based on a constructivist idea of learning, that is to say, learning as an active social process performed deliberately and reflexive. As explained in the Trainer’s Guide the content of teaching is not directly transmitted by the teacher but rather self constructed by the learner according to his/her perception, former experiences and knowledge structure which can express freely and in a creative way during the activities proposed in the Booklets.

All the activities have been imagined to make the learning process as constructive at the same time that entertaining as possible. We hope you will enjoy.

CREA
1. The concept of counselling

Counselling emphasizes the quality of the relationship built between counsellor and client. The core of the counselling process is based on the quality of the interpersonal relationship between counsellor and counselee. For developing such a relation, the counselling process has to fulfil three fundamental conditions:

- Warmth;
- Empathy;
- Genuineness

Within the counselling process, the practitioners use special steps such as active listening, responding and understanding. The results of this complex process are the clarification of the barriers and countered and a commitment to re-evaluate and develop own goals and tasks. The purpose of counselling is to help individuals understand and cope more efficiently with themselves, handle their personal development, roles and relationships with others.

In conclusion, counselling is a process that can help people:

- To clarify what is important to them in their life;
- To get in touch with their inner resources;
- In the exploration of feelings, thoughts and meanings particular to them;
- By offering support at times of crises;
- By offering support during developmental and transitional periods;
- To work through stuck issues- this may involve integrating childhood experiences;
- To reach a solution to problems
There are various assumptions underlying the practice of career counselling\(^1\). These include the following perspectives:

1. People have the ability and opportunity to make career choices for their lives. The amount of freedom in choices is partially dependent upon the social, economic, and cultural context of individuals.

2. Opportunities and choices should be available for all people, regardless of sex, socio-economic class, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, or cultural background.

3. Individuals are naturally presented with career choices throughout their lives.

4. People are generally involved in a wide range of work roles across their lifespan. These roles include both paid and unpaid work.

5. Career counsellors assist people to explore, pursue and attain their career goals.

6. Career counselling basically consists of four elements: (a) helping individuals to gain greater self-awareness in areas such as interests, values, abilities, and personality style, (b) connecting students to resources so that they can become more knowledgeable about jobs and occupations, (c) engaging students in the decision-making process in order that they can choose a career path that is well suited to their own interests, values, abilities and personality style, and (d) assisting individuals to be active managers of their career paths (including managing career transitions and balancing various life roles) as well as becoming lifelong learners in the sense of professional development over the lifespan.

7. The reasons why individuals enter particular occupations vary according to the amount of importance placed on personal preferences, such as interests, or external influences, such as labour market trends or parental expectations.

8. Career decision-making is not something that happens only once in a person’s life but, rather, it is an ongoing process that might take place at any age.

9. All forms of work are valuable, and contribute to the success and wellbeing of a society.

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\(^1\) From UNESCO’s Handbook on career counseling
Definition of terms

There are many different terms used across the world in the field of careers guidance and counselling. For the purpose of this guide each of the terms is defined below.

**Counselling**

Actively listening to an individual’s story and communicating understanding, respect and empathy; clarifying goals and assisting individuals with the decision-making process. Counselling is a mutual relationship between a counsellor (a professionally trained helper) and a client (a consumer of counselling services).

**Career counselling**

A largely verbal process in which a counsellor and counselee(s) are in a dynamic and collaborative relationship, focused on identifying and acting on the counselee’s goals, in which the counsellor employs a repertoire of diverse techniques and processes, to help bring about self-understanding, understanding of behavioural options available, and informed decision making in the counselee, who has the responsibility for his or her own actions (Herr & Cramer, 1996).

**Career**

The interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person’s lifespan including both paid and unpaid work in an individual’s life is known as career. People create career patterns as they make decisions about education, work, family and other life roles.

**Career development**

The total constellation of economical, sociological, psychological, educational, physical and chance factors that combine to shape one’s career is career development (Sears, 1982).
Distance Career Counselling - communications technology enhances counselling and training

In a dynamic economy occupational opportunities change as traditional work situations are transformed or eliminated. New developments in technology create a demand for new occupations. If people are going to take advantage of these opportunities, they need to receive counselling to direct their education. Making decisions about the future can be a difficult task for anyone.

The broad definition of career development includes not only work and employment, but also deals with life skills and overcoming difficulties encountered with life’s transitions.

Rural men and women share many of the same concerns and so there is a need to develop programs specifically for them. "Rural areas are changing and the career options are changing too. While traditional occupations are being cut back, new opportunities are opening as a result of government policies to encourage entrepreneurship. The importance of distance from markets is diminishing because of communications technologies. People in rural areas need information on distance education courses as well as conventional post-secondary education. Information about government and community services for entrepreneurs needs to be made available. Counselling must prepare students for migration to urban centres for education and employment but must also help to develop their careers in a rural setting if rural living is important to them."

In order to deliver counselling services to rural areas, materials and methods have to be adapted so that distance technology can be used.

We could use two methods to deliver programs by distance:

- To use a network to link clients in different communities to a counsellor supplemented with printed and audio-visual materials.
- To use a Train the Trainers approach to teach lay counsellors to deliver specific programs to people in their communities.

Employing the first method requires the use of specific counselling strategies. Audio teleconferencing does not let the counsellor see the facial expressions and other reactions of the clients. The counsellor has to be more sensitive to pitch and inflections of the client's voice and has to be able to recognize the voices of people he/she cannot see and make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak.
He/she also has to be comfortable with what may seem to be prolonged silence. What is often happening during this period is that participants at their various sites are discussing the issue with each other before they respond to the counsellor.

The system also allows the counsellor to hold confidential discussions with people in the program. Because it is private, clients can feel comfortable talking about personal matters. Since the programs are tailored to specific groups of people, there may be only four or five participants in any community. Linking them via teleconferencing with people in other communities who have similar concerns helps to overcome feelings that they are the only ones with problems deciding their futures. Communications technologies are becoming more and more important to career development in rural communities.

From an administrative perspective, distance counselling requires more planning. Printed materials and other resources need to be sent out to the site beforehand and the teleconferencing equipment must be scheduled in advance. The clients are often not familiar with teleconferencing and so they may be shy at the beginning of the program. To facilitate this type of delivery, the programs are packaged as a complete kit, with professionally published participant manuals, facilitator manuals and video cassettes.

The second method of delivering distance programs, training the community-based paraprofessionals, is also effective. Part of the counsellor’s job is to establish a trusting relationship with the clients.
2. Theoretical Approaches on Counselling

There are a lot of different approaches on counselling and psychotherapy, everyone of it bringing a unique or specific contribution to human behaviour understanding and having its own implications for the practice of counselling or/and psychotherapy.

There are three major approaches on counselling:
- The psychodynamic approaches;
- The behavioural/cognitive-behavioural approaches;
- The humanistic or experience based approaches.

The psychodynamic approaches are having their origins in Freud’s psychoanalysis who can be considered a research method as well as a counselling method.

The classic psychoanalytical approach (S. Freud) has some fundamental principles:
- The idea that humans have a lot of instinctive impulses and tendencies and he is preoccupied of the way they are being expressed or repressed in order not to get to the conscious level of one’s personality;
- The conviction that repressing in sexually tendency based and that psychic disorders have their origin in a troubled psychosexual development;
- The idea that troubled psychosexual development is based on conflicts and traumas within the early childhood, especially in Oedipus complex (the sexual desire towards the opposite sex parent);
- The belief in the universal and persistent character of this complex (Oedipus complex), who stays active at the unconscious level;
- The idea that individuals face conflicts between Id (unconscious instinctive drives and impulses), their substitutes, Ego’s defence mechanisms that try a mediation of external reality, according to the moral values and principals of the society (Superego).
The process of counselling of psychoanalytical nature has two essential moments: Catharsis and Insight. The first is an emotional discharge, a discharge of tensions and anxiousness by reliving on the psychical plan the passes experiences. It is very much alike the effect of religious confession, meaning to express one’s feelings in front of a priest. Catharsis is a very important moment in counselling because without the client expressing his/her feelings and beliefs the process of counselling can no longer continue.

The insight happens when the client suddenly discovers the source and the hidden motives of his/her behaviour. Freud’s psychoanalysis sustains that these elements have being structured since childhood, being unconscious and inaccessible to individuals. The role of counselling being exactly to help the individual to find out and understand what is happening to him and to use this understanding to modify the unfit behavioural reactions that he/she manifests.

According to Hutchinson, during the process of getting to the insight, there have to be four stages:
1. a preparation stage – which means that the individual has to experience the frustration and despair, followed by a very active activity of seeking his/her solution and then to go back to the old behavioural and thinking habits from where he can not see any way of dealing with the problem;
2. an incubation stage in which the individual experiences the desire to renounce and to deny the problem, the individual being unmotivated to solve his problem;
3. an insight stage in which the problem is revealing very clearly for the client and the solution comes from its self;
4. an assessment and elaboration of the solution stage in which the individual is facing external conditions and criteria, those being given by reality.

◊ **The modern and post-modern psychodynamic approaches** are Freud’s classical psychoanalysis based, giving their contribution on both the theoretical and methodological plan of counselling. Representative for these approaches are: A. Adler, C. Jung, K. Horney, O. Rank. H. Sullivan. All of them have tried to overcome Freud’s biological impulses perspective, emphasizing the role of some social, ethical and cultural aspects for individual’s psychical development.
Alfred Adler, in his counselling model, emphasizes the importance of the individual assuming the responsibility of creating his own destiny and finding a sense of living. Unlike Freud, who sustained that the main conflict is of sexual nature, Adler thinks that the main conflict is in the individual’s tendency to overcome the inferiority complex or feeling. According to Adler, the man’s purpose in life is to reveal his potential in order to overcome the inferiority complex within the childhood, Adler looking forwards to what the individual might become.

Carl Gustav Jung agrees to Freud’s interpretation on the role of conscious and unconscious but enlarges the temporal space of human personality, sustaining that at the basis of human’s actions is not only his own life experience, but a larger one, the experience of the community he is living in. Finally, Jung thinks that human actions can be reactivated also through moral or racial values.

Regarding the psychodynamic approaches, an important contribution also had Mann. He introduced the so-called “psychotherapy limited in time”, centred on reducing the symptoms. This psychotherapeutically model consists in a 12 sessions treatment or in a 25 – 30 sessions treatment, according to Strupp and his collaborative team.

The modern psychodynamic approaches tend to reduce the duration of the counselling process, to reduce the number of weekly sessions and to give more attention to ego’s functions, considering this part of one’s personality a developmental and life controlling factor. Likewise, the adepts of these theoretical approaches emphasize more on the interpersonal relationships and on individuals actual situations.

In order to put into practice these theoretical approaches, there are a lot of methods and techniques, firstly elaborated by Freud and then developed by his followers. Following we are trying to synthesize some of them by describing them briefly.

- **Free associations method** – consists, in essence, to leave the client and the client’s mind to wonder freely, so that the client could say anything, without being embarrassed or feeling the need to make a good impression. The free associations products may be memories, images, and dreams, accusative thoughts, feelings.
- **Dreams analysis** – same as free associations, dreams can be considered as subject’s reaction to his own unconscious experiences. The content of the dream related by the client is some kind of screen behind which there is the latent content – dreams real significance. The latent dream content represents feelings and desires highly repressed,
in which the individual is very deep implicated that by him self, he can not reveal them in his conscious. Practically, every dream represents a straggle to resolve individual conflicts that are of unconscious nature.

- **Client’s actions analysis.** Both nonverbal and verbal communication behaviour have key elements for the analysis as well as unessential elements that can be manifested inside or outside the counselling session. Among the manifested behaviours of clients during the counselling session there are: clients excessive care not to “ruin” his clothes, anxious looks over the shoulder towards the counsellor, flirting behaviour, errors in pronouncing some words etc. outside the counselling sessions there are: behavioural changes at work or at home, symptoms that appear and disappear, reactions to a situation or other charged with more or less anxiousness, changes in the way the client tolerates his friends and/or family etc.

- **Transference and resistance** – have been considered by Freud as means that help us to make a difference between psychoanalytical approaches and other psycho therapeutically approaches. **Transference** refers to the relation client – counsellor who is irrational, projective and ambivalent. While the counsellor keeps his neutrality, the majority of the clients emotional reactions come from his own hidden tendencies and desires. Analysing the relations related to this transfer drives to the discovery of client’s early childhood experiences that are the ones generating these tendencies. Transference determines the client to ask upon his behavioural reactions that remained out of his conscious. When the insight has been produced “the irrational vale” that covered the real origins of the clients’ actions falls and this helps to the appearance of some changes at individual’s personality level. From the counsellor’s point of view, the transference is very important because it reveals a new light upon the relationships of the client with the rest of the world and because the counsellor can use this relationship to encourage his client to overcome resistance. **Resistance** refers to any element or situation that interferes with the natural development of the counselling process. Generally, client’s resistance manifests under various forms, such as: disapproval to counsellor’s interpretations, realizations of a lot of superficial associations, long pauses during the associations, delays and absences form the counselling services, new symptoms, sleeping during the counselling sessions. The motives for this resistance are also various, such as: getting to a certain point where the client is satisfied with the situation he’s in, a certain type of adaptation, the fight against free associations because he feels the world he created for him self is being threatened, fear of some unconscious tendencies and desires that he can not yet accept at conscious level etc. The last type of resistance goes to dropping the counselling sessions.
● **Counter transference** – represents mostly an emotional experience both for the client and counsellor. Concerning the counsellor, the emotional state can be manifested under the form of counter transference, which means that the counsellor is responding emotionally to effective solicitations of his client. That’s why, feeling control towards the client as well as not becoming indifferent and less receptive to the client needs is a fundamental problem for every counsellor. He has to have understanding for the persons he relates with, to respond to their problems, but in the mean time, to control his own feelings, emotions and attitudes.

● **Ego analysis** – means to analyse the force and specific nature of individual’s conscious attitudes and behaviours that can put into action the resistances to diverse interpretations. There for, the counsellor has to know both the roots of the actual problems but the current aspects of the client’s life that are active at a certain moment in time.

● **Interpretations** – are not some advices, suggestions or trials to influence the individual in the process of counselling, nor a projection of counsellor’s attitudes and opinions. It consists in rearranging the materials produced by the client during free associations and dream analysis, action taking by the counsellor, and giving them an explanation through the psychoanalytical concepts. These interpretations made by the counsellor help the client to get to the insight and to discover what causes his behavioural disorders.

● **Working over the material produced by the client** – represents the continuing of the process of further specific interpretations even if the client doesn’t accept or assimilates the initial emotional interpretations offered by the counsellor.

Concluding, the main goal of the psychodynamic approaches is to get deep into the unconscious process meaning to make the unconscious become conscious. When this thing happened the client is trying to use it in order to organize his Ego in such a way that will permit his psychical energy to be used in a health and adequate way.

► **The behavioural/cognitive-behavioural approaches** are theoretically and methodologically based on the thesis and concepts of the behavioural current in psychology initiated by J.B. Watson at the beginning of the XX-th century. These approaches have appeared as a response, a reaction to those who were emphasizing excessively the forces of unconscious nature within the human psychic. The main concept of the behavioural/cognitive-behavioural approaches is learning. Thus, according to the adepts of these approaches, direct behavioural changes of the individual drive to changes in attitudes and feelings, so
the process of counselling is a process of learning, the counsellor expecting from his client to establish and have in mind some specific goals to help him with his own behaviour.

Even if behavioural counsellors belong to different approaches, relatively distinct, and use a variety of methods and techniques, there still is a general model of counselling that has the following steps:
1. Identification of the problem;
2. Formulating counselling objectives in terms that can be observed and measured;
3. Observation and registration of the behaviour;
4. Establishing and implementing counselling strategies;
5. Assessment of the way the objectives have been accomplished;
6. Counselling process termination.

Following this “itinerary”, we can conclude that adepts of behavioural approaches aim to change the external behaviour of an individual and not to modify his unconscious.

◊ The classic behavioural approach uses as main concepts in counselling reinforcement and behaviour control. Reinforcement means to use external stimulation in such a way that certain behaviours to be recompensed and thus to increase their possibility to appear again. In this way, the process of counselling becomes a logical process of behavioural control, based on knowing the basic conditions that permit its modification. Another concept used in counselling of behavioural nature is unconditioning. This principle refers to reducing or erasing undesirable behaviours by reducing or eliminating the respective reinforcement. So, the main purpose of behaviour based counselling is to eliminate undesirable behaviours by unconditioning and to replace them with desirable ones.

Methods and techniques used in behaviour based counselling are various, thus will be briefly presented only the most important.

- Eliminating undesirable behaviours technique using two other techniques: the implosive technique and the exposition technique. The implosive technique is based on gradual anxiousness increase, also keeping the client “safe” emotionally, in this way the force of anxious stimulus is being reduced and the behaviour to avoid stressful situations is eliminated. Related to the first, the exposition technique is mainly used on clients with limited imaginative capabilities (for example, people who are afraid of heights).
• The technique of systematically desensibilization (Wolpe) is structured on three stages aiming to learn the client how to relax or to remain calm in anxious situations. The three stages are:
  ➢ Learning to relax, in the first 6 counselling sessions, using muscular relaxation method elaborated by Jacobson or any other method;
  ➢ Establishing hierarchies (within the first counselling sessions it is established a hierarchy of anxious situations for the client, beginning with the most stressful and terminating with the less stressful;
  ➢ Desensibilization used until the client can remain calm while he imagines situations that use to be anxious to him.

• The assertive technique has been used both as a desensibilization technique and as a method to develop certain abilities to deal with everyday life situations. It is also called the assertive training and it gives a lot of attention to the development of skills and abilities involved in interpersonal relation.

◊ The cognitive-behavioural approach is based on using concepts that are formulated in operational terms and on empirical validation of the counselling. Very different from the former type of approaches (psychoanalytical), this approach denies the role of the affect and the unconscious and gives credit to the consciousness lucidity and to individual’s capacity to judge and test reality. A.T. Beck, who began his professional life as psychoanalytical psychotherapist, set the bases of this approach. In his work he came to the conclusion that an individual’s cognitions (mental messages) affect both feeling and behaviour. In contrast to the psychoanalytic understanding of emotional disturbance or behavioural dysfunction, which is stated to root in unsolved trauma from childhood, the cognitive-behavioural approach considers such problems to arise not directly from the events themselves but from how the individual interprets and creates meanings for them. Cognitive-behavioural counsellors use a model of cognitive processing called the cognitive distortion model devised by Beck. In this model Neck proposed that when a person perceives a situation to be threatening it results in a reduction in the reasoning of functioning of normal cognitive processes.

Cognitive distortions include:
1. Over-generalization – the tendency towards sweeping conclusions made from limited evidence;
2. Personalization – the tendency of distorted thinking which involves the individual imagining that events are the result of their (faulty) actions;

3. Dichotomous thinking – the tendency to take a polarized view of situations, e.g. regarding people as either all good or all bad.

◊ **The rational – emotional approach** was founded by Albert Ellis. This theoretical approach adopts a robust directive therapeutic style, which challenges and confronts the irrational believes of clients. According to Ellis, people are born with a certain potential both for rational thinking and irrational thinking. They have a lot of positive and negative predisposal and they create by themselves different dysfunctional situations that generate situations in which they cannot adapt to. In the same time, Ellis said that humans have the ability to change the cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes. In such a perspective, the human being must be helped in a counselling activity of a short duration to maintain his psychical state of mind. Ellis also proposed a method of counselling, named the “ABC theory of personality functioning”. What this means:

- **A** – represents the activating event – a person’s action or attitude or an actual physical event;
- **B** – represents the belief the person has about the event;
- **C** – represents the consequence of the event, in terms of the individual’s emotions and behaviour in relation to their experiencing of the event.

The rational emotive therapy counsellor teaches the client, through the ABC formula, how to engage in metacognitive processing of their thoughts with regard to events. Cognitive reactions to events can be monitored, reflected on and understood, giving the client more choice of perspective.

◊ **The reality therapy** is a relatively new counselling theory, which emphasizes changes that people can do in their deeds and thoughts. It has a phenomenological basis and an existentialist kernel. It claims that the internal world of people has the greatest influence in selecting behaviour. It is in the same time action oriented, didactic, directive, preventive, cognitive and behavioural. The author of this theory is William Glasser.
Reality therapy claims that human learning is a process achieved over the entire lifetime: we are what we do or, by extension, we are what we learn to do.

That is why the purposes of counselling are: to help the client become autonomous and responsible for the behaviours that affect him and others (in a preventive manner), to clarify the purposes of life, to draw up a realistic schedule for the achievement of personal needs and desires, to trust his/her own capacity to produce change, to focus upon behaviour and the present, to eliminate punishments and excuses, to formulate a new schedule if the previous one was not achieved, reviewing the successes obtained. All these make the client stronger and have a greater productivity.

The humanistic or experience based approaches are different from the other two because these approaches consist in a valorisation of human being potential and have as main objective fighting against alienation. The humanistic approach divides itself into different other theoretical approaches related to one another as follows: the existentialist approach, the person-centred counselling approach, the group counselling and the gestalt's approach.

The existentialist approach has as main contributors L. Binswanger, Rollo May who claimed that human's dilemma is the fact that he is in the same time subject of actions who wants and feels and object of actions orientated on external situations. In this last quality, the individual has to do something and not to choose if he must do or not do that thing. In such a perspective the discovery of Self process and openness to experiences consist in internal forces as well as in external ones that give directions to the human behaviour. There for, the existentialist analysis aims are:

- To get to the conscious level regarding individual's own problems and to activate the energetic potential in a latent stage;
- To eliminate discomfort generated by the existential impasse in which the individual is straggling and personality maturation;
- To obtain an authentic self image which drives to clarifying the personal identity and relational harmonization;
- Self acceptance and eliminating the intra psychical conflicts;
- To modify and change unauthentic behaviour;
- To solve the existential crises in which the individual is in and to get to conscious level the self determination of his destiny;
Personal self-completion, authentic development, spontaneity, and creativity, all of these driving to the human being reconstruction.

In conclusion, May emphasizes the individual’s responsibility for his own life and encourages human independence in front of pseudo determinists that appear to oblige the individual to retract and to avoid social implication and involvement.

◊ **Person-centred counselling approach** was developed after Rogers’ original work, the paradigm grants an increased importance to the subjective experiences of the individual in relation to the environment. It underlines the fact that individuals are entirely responsible for the usage on the internal resources they possess in order to ensure a harmonious personal growth and development. The guarantee of personal growth and development stated by the person-centred approach depends on certain conditions according to which the counselling relationship is built.

This approach is built on some key concepts, such as: self-concept (the idea that people have of themselves), conditions of worth (conditions generated by others that allow a person to think and feel that he/she is accepted), organism self (the true self that is aware of its needs for personal development), self-actualising person (a person who has an internal locus of self-evaluation), emotional conflict (generated by an impoverished self-concept that leads to unhappiness), perceptual distortion, denial and conditions for personal growth.

Some techniques and strategies fundamental for this paradigm are the following: the congruence or authenticity that ensure an opening to one’s own feelings and launch the challenge of being authentic as well as the empathy and positive unconditional acceptance.

◊ **The group counselling** is focused upon the person, it contains between 6 and 8 participants in a weekly session lasting for 2 or 3 hours under the coordination of the professional. When a group of adults has more than 8 members, it requires the presence of a co-leader to follow the instruction between the participants and to grant every client the opportunity to express their personal problems.

The role of the counsellor consists in creating a secure environment for the members to feel comfortable, and share their personal concerns regarding their concepts about self, family,
interpersonal relations and social or educational difficulties. For this purpose, forming the group is one of the essential tasks of the counsellor.

Another positive aspect of group counselling consists in granting and receiving support from the counsellor and from the other members of the group. The content of the dialogue is at a great extent personalized. For the client, the experience of group counselling can lead to greater benefits when preoccupied with his/her own self, with the ability to face challenges answering questions like: “Who am I?”, “How do others react to my feelings?”, “What draws me closer to the others?”, “What makes me different from the others?".

The leaders of the group have to be acquainted with the stages and statuses of the group process and to be able to identify them accurately within the group under their supervision.

◊ The gestalt’s approach is based on a very generous concept about the spontaneous creative resources that the individual is capable of resources that can be activated, given a direction and transformed by the person itself in ways of natural healing and growth. This approach centres on the perceptual, affective and imaginative experience of the individual that manifests in the counselling context through different strategies of dialog and communication and a variety of role-plays. The main concept of the gestalt’s approach is the insight to which the client gets through self exploration and learning the strategy of self awareness and self transformation, in the measure in which the individual accepts and decides freely and fully responsible of his own actions.

The counsellors that work based on this approach are paying attention to the “here and now”, being focused on memories of the experiences past of the client, fixed or expressed symbolic in positions of the body (postural attitudes), in habits, in convictions and behaviours. They seek to activate in their clients the capacity of consciousness observers in the present time of their past experiences brought into the present and re-experienced in order to become comprehensible.

The gestalt’s approach in counselling claims that it offers to the individuals an authentic way to be fully responsible for them selves. Throughout the psycho therapeutically dialog also named the dialog experience, the client is being stimulated to develop his own resources for his own support. Regarding this aspect, the gestalt’s dialog is a
process of self discovery and self awareness and not an interpretative or modulation of individual's subjectivity. The counsellor helps the client to learn the strategy of self-transformation of his own behaviour, of how to become more aware, more responsible and more efficient with him self and of how to use his ability of awareness in the process of personal self sustenance.

All these presented theories are not working separately but in a systemic action, one being divided from the other and one completing the other. The counsellors working in adult education use all of them, most of the times not being aware of this regarding their clients unique situations.

That’s why it is very important for the counselling practitioners to know the core concepts and aspects of these theoretical approaches in order to implement them in concrete counselling situations.
In the context of transformations registered at a societal level, the individuals must face challenges regarding the change of their working place or career. In order to properly handle these new existential contexts, where work and career are looked upon as core areas of life, and concepts such as career development and career choice are important for all individuals, we need specialised informational resources as well as a large spectrum of counselling services, which should facilitate the process of decision or personal choices making.

According to one of the 5th key message from Memorandum (Brussels, 2002) on Lifelong Learning – Rethinking guidance and counselling, a new approach is needed which envisages the counselling as a continuously accessible service for all the people, and which overcomes the distinction between educational, vocational and personal guidance.

As a response to all this new requirements, career counselling provides an alternative through it’s broad range of programs and services that help people explore self and career options, understand and access labour market information, acquire critical employability skills and facilitate the transition process from the world of education to the world of work. Thorough the services provided career counselling enable individuals to lead a satisfying life in a constantly changing work environment.

In this respect, there is a strong emphasis on the nature, quality, and accessibility of the counselling services and on identifying the special knowledge and skill requirements for the service providers. On a practical level, it is imperative that career counsellors follow professional and ethical guidelines in their specific counselling roles and settings. A special attention is paid to competency standards, on how to acquire or enhance the minimum level of knowledge and skills necessary to provide qualitative counselling services. These competency standards provide relevant criteria for each practitioner on how to evaluate their specific
knowledge and skills as part of their continuing professional education process.

In order to be able to grasp the importance of using a certain competency model in career counselling practice first, we have to provide a comprehensive definition of the term competency, and to point out some of its important dimensions, which can be found under the frame of different competency models.

The way of defining competencies in the field of human resources is the closest one to the undergoing we are aiming at. In this respect, the concept of competency appears to be “an underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance on the job” (Klemp, 1980). Any attempt to define competencies ought to direct to certain knowledge, skills and attitudes specific to the envisaged profession, the competency being seen as “a cluster of related knowledge, skills and attitudes that affects a major part of one’s job (role or responsibility)”. These competency components strongly correlated with the performance on the job can be measured with well-accepted standards and can be developed or improved via training (Parry, 1996).

In order to be able to offer quality counselling services it is not enough just to define the competencies linked to some particular types of counselling, but also to provide an integrate model that comprises all its certain components. Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) stated that a competency model is necessarily built on a complex and particular mixture of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics that have to be performed in a certain counselling context. Although straightforward these competencies might seem easy to identify, develop or assess, the reality of building a competency model is far more complicated than that.

In a competency model, the person’s characteristics are the most complex components, especially because it can be represented by an aptitude, an innate characteristics to acquire some special skills or core personality traits. Some of these traits like: self-confidence, self-sufficiency, emotional stability is essential in performing specific functions and developing certain competencies.

The certain skills required by a competency can be extremely diverse, varying from highly proficiencies to complex and less tangible capabilities. The skills implied by a certain competency could be easier or harder to measure and put in an inventory. Also, according to the level of difficulty of the implied knowledge, competencies can be easy to measure or complex to asses.
Elaborated during years of research and good practice, the model of competencies proposed by Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) includes both innate and acquired abilities, and can be presented as a pyramid.

![Competency Pyramid](Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999)

The proposed competency model can be interpreted from bottom to top. At the foundation of a specific competency there have to be core personality traits, innate talents and aptitudes. These can be incorporated in a large variety of skills and knowledge acquired through learning and experience. At the top, the specific sets of behaviours represent the manifestations of all the innate and acquired abilities. The idea of expressing the abilities in behavioural terms has a great importance and seems to be a common denominator for many competency models.

In order to assure the validity and applicability of a competency model, besides identifying the necessary set of competencies, it is essential to provide examples when a particular competency is demonstrated. Also, although the innate characteristics have a strong impact on building a competency model, it is important to express the competencies in behavioural terms, because behaviours can be taught and modified and assessed.

Regarding the methodology used in elaborating competency models, since the first model proposed by McClelland (1973), the methods have evolved managing to identify with accuracy the behaviours required to successfully perform a given role, in our case the counsellor’s one.
Some of the most popular methods of building a competency model are:

- Generic Model Overlay Method.
- Flexible Job Competency Model Method.

The quality of the counselling services offered by a practitioner is highly related to an ongoing process of self-improvement, which refers to competencies, functions and basic or specific counselling skills. In a training program for councillors it is very important to follow a competency-based model, especially built on a functional approach – the functions that graduates of the program might perform in practice. Below a certain area of specialization (e.g.: school, career, personal counselling) there are always some core competencies that apply to all.

In this context, a question is raised: What skills, knowledge and characteristics are required to do counselling? All the doubtful aspects concerning the set of competencies necessary for the counsellors may become clear using a competency framework.

A competency framework “describes the particular combination of the skills, knowledge and characteristics, personal behaviours needed to effectively perform a certain role” (Lucia, 1999).

A comprehensive competency framework can work as a useful instrument in designing a training programme or conducting day by day practice; ensuring that all the career counsellors will have a similar set of abilities and characteristics by providing a list of behaviours and skills that must be developed to maintain satisfactory levels of performance. A competency framework is a mean to address the counsellors’ needs but not only of them, shows the role expected to be preformed by the counsellors, or what counsellors should focus on in their own performance.

The benefits of competencies framework could be approached from a lot of points of view, such as (Lucia, 1999):

a) Selection:
- provides a complete picture on the counselling requirements;
• helps distinguish between competencies that are trainable and those that are more difficult to develop;

b) Training and development:
• enables people to focus on the skills, knowledge and characteristics that have the most impact on their work;
• ensures the adequate training and development opportunities for the counsellors;
• makes the most effective use of training and development time and money;
• provides a framework for ongoing coaching and feedback;

c) Appraisal:
• provides a shared understanding of what will be monitoring and measured;
• focuses and facilitates the performance appraisal discussion;
• provides focus for gaining information about a person’s behaviour on the job;

d) Succession planning:
• clarifies the skills, knowledge and characteristics required for the job or role in question;
• provides a method to assess a counsellor’s readiness for the role;
• focuses training and development plans to address missing competencies.

Nowadays, it is essential to build a competency framework on the common points of models that have been developed to date. Such a competency framework must be based on what counsellors need to do in order to provide quality services to clients, rather than the training they should receive. It accounts for the activities that professionals perform, and therefore is easily understood by both practitioners and clients. This approach has some aspects, such as:

• It recognizes that people acquire proficiency from many sources and ultimately, it is more important to address what people can do, rather than how they learned to do it.
• It is closely linked to specific competencies for career counselling.
• It could serve as a template for developing training programs to help practitioners acquire counselling competencies.

In the specialized literature, there are presented several initiatives for developing a comprehensive competency framework in career counselling field. Some approaches are built upon the roles performed by career development practitioners, others on the special type of training that career practitioners require, focusing on certain areas of practice, functions or tasks performed, outlining the skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes needed.

For example, the National Career Development Association (NCDA), a division of the American Counselling Association (ACA), established professional competency statements that provide guidance for the minimum competencies necessary to perform effectively career counselling. Skills and knowledge are represented by designated competency areas, which have been developed by professional career counsellors and counsellor educators. The Career Counselling Competency Statements (1997) can serve as a guide for career counselling training programs or as a checklist for persons that want to acquire or to enhance their skills in career counselling. According to this model, in order to work as a professional engaged in career counselling, the individual must demonstrate minimum level of competencies in eleven designated areas, such as: career development theory; individual and group counselling skills; individual / group assessment; information / resources; program promotion, management and implementation; coaching, consultation and performance improvements; diverse populations; supervision; ethical / legal issues; research / evaluation; technology.

Some aspects determine the nature of the competency framework in career counselling, with a strong application to practitioner preparation and professional training, such as:

• Building the framework on the common points of existing competencies models.

• Focusing on competencies needed to provide direct services to clients.

• Concentrating on what service providers need to do in order to offer quality services to clients.

In 2001, The Canadian Guidelines and Standards developed an important taxonomy for Career Practitioners, intending to spell out the competencies that service providers need in order to deliver comprehensive career services to clients across the lifespan. By working
in partnership with associations and practitioner groups, the standards / guidelines have been built from within the profession by the people who deliver career development services and programs. Taken as a whole, the standards and guidelines map out the knowledge, skills and attitudes that practitioners need in order to deliver quality career counselling services to clients.

The purpose of developing such competency framework was to provide the structure for developing guidelines and standards that ultimately will outline the skills, knowledge, and personal attributes required for responding to client needs in contemporary society. The framework provides comprehensive, easily understood definitions of the envisaged competencies, so that practitioners and clients easily understand them.

The framework was designed by following several core principles, such as:

- The framework must be open to discussion, feedback and inquiries from as many people and organizations as possible.
- The framework must be flexible and respond to a wide number of professionals with varying degrees of formal education and a broad range of experience. Emphasis was placed on respecting differences of training and experience in the profession.
- The goal was to solve the seeming paradox of creating an inclusive framework that would be valued and meaningful to professionals, their clients and employers.

Also, it was decided that the model would focus on the areas of service provided to clients and on the functions performed and tasks undertaken in offering that service. A functional approach that focuses on direct services to clients, would ultimately identify the skills, knowledge, and personal attributes unique to career development professionals, and could in the end serve as a template for developing training programs to help practitioners acquire those competencies.

All the people involving in the process of development considered that an efficient competency framework must be built, following these principles:

- building on consensus;
- focusing on services provided direct to clients;
• recognizing existing best practices;
• integrating the diversity of roles and skill sets existing in the field.

The final version of the model includes three types of competencies and uses a code of ethics as a foundation:

• **Core competencies** consist of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that all career development professionals require. In this context a special attention is paid to attitudes that direct the acquisition and proper usage of a well-defined set of knowledge and skills. These attitudes refer to the openness to researching change in the nature of work, lifelong learning, self-directness, service orientation, and growth toward independence and interdependence. The core skills are usually represented by educational and occupational analysis (e.g.: finding resources, critical events in career development and educational practices, policy interpretation and application). All these are closely linked to some core knowledge that is generally represented by resources / materials / tools.

• **Areas of specialization** are additional skills, knowledge, and attitudes that may be required depending on the type of work setting and the client groups that are being served.

• **Common skills and knowledge** consist of competencies that are used in more than one area of specialization, but not in all. Initial field-testing of the standards document revealed that some competencies were relevant to more than one area of specialization. Rather than list these competencies as part of each Area of Specialization, they are grouped together and called Common Skills and Knowledge.

Following this structure the Canadian competency framework can offer suggestions for professional development, be a guide in developing training programs, or a framework for licensing process. The core envisaged functions of this framework are the following:

• Means for recognizing the duties performed by professionals and organizations specializing in career counselling;

• means for recognizing the professional capabilities of professionals and organizations specializing in career development;

• guide to develop curriculum for training career counsellor;
• means for raising the level of competency in the profession;
• Means for creating enough common points in various initiatives to allow a large degree of occupational mobility for career professionals.

The competency framework answers to future demands, provides a foundation for designing career counsellors training and for quality assurance to the public which recognizes and validates the broad practitioner’s skill sets and creates a common language in career counselling field.

This competency framework could be used in many ways:
• a guide for practitioners to self-assess their knowledge and skills;
• a means for identifying gaps in training or service delivery;
• a template for curriculum development;
• a model for performance appraisal;
• a method for planning professional development.

Also, the Canadian competency framework that will be used as a guideline for this handbook challenges the future research in the field to provide an answer to the following questions:
• How useful is this distinction between core and specialized competencies in the process of building competency standards?
• What is the experts’ perception regarding the importance of some specialized counselling competencies?
• Which of the current career counselling competencies are components of the general practice of counselling, and which competencies are particular to a specific practice?
4. Bibliography