



# **A comparative examination of the efficacy of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional interventions as helping techniques in adult guidance counselling**

Imelda Fallon

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**A comparative examination of the efficacy of  
Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Conventional  
Interventions as helping techniques  
in Adult Guidance Counselling**

**By**

**Imelda Fallon**

**Student No. 11042303**

**University of Limerick**

**Research Supervisor: Dr. Lucy Hearne**

**Thesis submitted to University of Limerick for the award of Master of Arts in  
Guidance Counselling**

**May 2014**

## **Declaration**

*The author hereby declares that this thesis is entirely her own work.*

*No element of the work described in this dissertation has been previously  
submitted for any degree in University of Limerick, or in any other institution.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

“Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray.” - Rumi.

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## **Glossary**

AEGI	Adult Education Guidance Initiative
ALCES	Adult Literacy Community Education Scheme
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DES	Department of Education and Science
ETB	Educational and Training Board
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (Training and Employment Authority)
IGC	Institute of Guidance Counsellors
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
NDP	National Development Plan
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NGF	National Guidance Forum
NLP	Neuro-Linguistic Programming
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (Further Education and Training Authority)
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

## **Abstract**

The overall aim of this study was to compare the use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) interventions and the conventional forms of guidance interventions in adult guidance counselling practice. To facilitate a response to the main research questions, it was essential to gain an understanding of the unique experiences and the effectiveness of such interventions for clients. A specific focus of the research was to examine the lasting effect of the outcomes and the benefits from engaging in a helping intervention. A tactical approach to helping which is reflective of new organisational work structures is fundamental to effective guidance (Bimrose, 2010). The research also considered the factors related to why people engage in adult education and the consequential benefits for the adult learner.

An interpretivist paradigm was employed using a case study approach which concentrated on the subjective experiences of four clients of one Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI) service. Research data was collected through semi-structured interviews with each participant who had a guidance intervention between seven to eight months previously.

The findings of the study demonstrate that adult learners benefit from helping interventions such as NLP and conventional guidance interventions. The research findings relate to both the process and outcomes of the intervention type. The experience was positive and unique for all participants. The NLP participants appeared to engage at a deeper level during their intervention, hence the outcomes resonated at a very personal level for these two participants.

It is envisaged that this research can contribute to exploring new ways of eclectically working with the adult client. It is also hoped to provide a better understanding of the soft and tangible outcomes that are realised through participation in adult education. Consequently, the adult guidance service has a significant role to play in developing the clients coping strategies and career management skills to promote autonomous adult learners. Based on the findings, a number of recommendations have been suggested for consideration.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This research study examines the effectiveness of helping interventions for clients of an AEGI adult guidance service who returned to education as a result of unemployment. It is an expansion of the previous study (Fallon, 2013) which explored the efficacy of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) as a helping technique in adult guidance counselling. This research aims to compare outcomes for the participants following engagement in two different interventions; NLP and conventional guidance counselling. The following sections will discuss the context and justification of the research and the researchers' position therein. The methodology, aims and objectives of the research and a plan of the thesis are also presented.

### **1.1 Context and Justification for the Research Study**

This current research study is based on a post graduate research study, (Fallon, 2013). This follow-on study is examining the efficacy of NLP and conventional interventions as helping techniques in adult guidance counselling. It has been carried out within the context of recent discourse on the need for evidence based research in the guidance counselling profession. Guidance practitioners instinctively vary techniques and philosophies to meet the needs of clients and this develops with confidence over time (Kidd et al., 1997). However, the systematic use of eclecticism needs to be reinforced by a sound knowledge of theory, the effectiveness of the techniques in practice and used appropriately to the client and the situation (ibid.). Savickas (2011a) explains the importance of advancing career theory and strategies to support people to engage with the unprecedented challenges of the global economy; accordingly, guidance counsellors must embrace best practice and new ways of helping. Guidance is critical to steer people in a positive direction thus helping them to adopt new ways of improving their employment prospects (NESC, 2011).

The significance of research to inform guidance must not be underestimated, thus cultivating a workforce with developed skills in research methods is fundamental to the

professional development of both the practitioner and the guidance practice (Neary and Hutchinson, 2009). It is essential to continuously improve on best practice “reflective of the social organisation of work changes” and in doing so, strive to care for the human element in the service against a backdrop of time constraints and diminishing finances (Bimrose, 2010, p.9). Guidance counsellors are innovatively embracing change in a recovering global economy to promote the development and growth of their clients towards self-construction and adaptability (NESC, 2013; Savickas, 2008).

Although there is much discussion about the ‘responsible learner’ who is expected to avail of lifelong learning to remain employable; there is also ample evidence of poor first educational experiences (Jackson et al., 2011). While the effects of the Irish recession permeate every group in society, a strong correlation exists between educational attainment and the later life-chances of adults in the Irish context (McCoy et al., 2007). Prior to the enactment of the Education Welfare Act (Government of Ireland, 2000) to address absenteeism, early school leaving was not out of the ordinary (ibid). Three of the participants in this study exited school in their early teenage years with consequent feelings of negativity. Social participation remains a weak link as it was not adequately addressed during the boom; guidance and a review of further education and training are among the selected areas to advance Ireland’s agenda for reform (NESC, 2013).

To equip people with the necessary skills to manage their career through learning, training and integration pathways is an empowerment to be tapped into throughout the lifespan; thus enabling the person to fully participate in society (OECD, 2008). The adult client of an AEGI service may experience guidance counselling for a very limited time – this is the opportunity to take a holistically all-embracing approach towards their development (NCGE, 2012). A reservoir of approaches and techniques could have the dual effect of enabling the counsellor and the client to negotiate adversity. In this expanded study the outcomes from NLP and conventional guidance interventions will be examined and compared within this context to further advance knowledge in the field.

## **1.2 Researchers Position in Study**

Thomas (2009) asserts the importance of stating the positionality of the researcher in interpretivist research. Therefore, this section aims to contextualize the researcher’s place

in the study. During a sixteen year employment history, I have worked in both the public and private sector with experience of transitions into and out of five separate employment settings. I became familiar with the use of NLP in industry during my time working in training and development. I was intrigued to explore the usefulness of NLP in adult guidance counselling and this formed the basis for research in my previous study (Fallon, 2013). I am currently working as a guidance counsellor in an AEGI Service. However, the research for this study and the previous study was carried out in another AEGI Service where I completed my guidance counselling placement. This could be considered ‘insider’ research as according to Robson (2007), I had a prior association or role in the research location. However, it could also be considered ‘outsider’ research as I was not investigating my own clients (ibid.). I think I straddle both areas and this was helpful for two reasons. The research was considered valuable, therefore permission was forthcoming and I was at ease in the research setting. Yet, I was not overly acquainted with the research population thus eliminating familiarity bias (ibid.).

While the unemployment rate in Ireland is steadily decreasing with a welcome reduction in male inactivity in particular, I see first-hand in my role as a guidance counsellor, the 11.8% (CSO, March, 2014) of people out of work face strong competition for jobs. Egan (2010) contends that giving hope is fundamental in the choice and commitment process for positive outcomes. There is no longer a clearly defined career path, however, with support, transitions between employment and unemployment can have the potential to liberate and add value to lives (Field, 2010). With a personal experience of off-ramping to be at home with my children for five years, I can empathise with the unique feelings associated with transitions out of and into the workforce (Sharf, 2010). This study aims to develop new insights through the critical voice of the service user and enhance learning in practice and service delivery.

### **1.3 Research Methodology**

An interpretivist paradigm underpins this research as it is a study about people and outcomes for them following engagement in a helping intervention in the context of adult guidance. Bimrose (2006) appraises strategies which support both the process and the soft outcomes of career guidance. The researcher was primarily interested in understanding the soft outcomes of interventions for the adult clients; hence a narrative inquiry was

employed as it allows for personal descriptions of experiences (Savickas, 2005). A case study approach was used comprising four clients of an AEGI service who had participated on a Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) (Thomas, 2009). Two of the clients participated in the previous study, Fallon (2013) and the other two were new participants. An individual semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the participants in late February 2014. The interviews were transcribed and a thematic analysis strategy was used to generate the primary findings. The critical issues of validity, reflexivity and ethics are considered throughout the methodology used.

#### **1.4 Aim and Objectives**

The primary aim of this study was to compare outcomes for clients following NLP interventions and the conventional forms of guidance interventions in one AEGI service to inform practice.

The specific objectives were to:

1. Gain an understanding of the effectiveness of both interventions for AEGI clients
2. Review literature pertinent to adult guidance theory, policy and practice to facilitate a knowledgeable context to underpin the study
3. Elucidate the experiences of the AEGI service user through the use of semi-structured interviews
4. Determine the endurance of the outcomes and the benefits from engaging in a helping intervention
5. Illuminate the often *hidden* work of guidance from the overall findings to further inform policy, practice and research

#### **1.5 Plan of the Thesis**

Chapter 1: The Introduction provides a justification for the study in a theoretical, political and practical context. The researcher's position in the study is described together with an outline of the methodology, aim and objectives. A plan of the thesis is also provided to guide the reader.

Chapter 2: The Literature Review is an examination of broad-ranging secondary sources of information to enlighten this research study. It provides a critical evaluation of

previous research on guidance policy and practice, the development of guidance, provision in the current climate and the role of the guidance counsellor; adult education, career transitions and theoretical interventions and frameworks for helping clients.

Chapter 3: The Methodology describes the theoretical and practical approach used in the research design. The research questions are identified together with a rationale for the chosen research paradigm. Methods of data collection and analysis are described. Issues of reliability, validity, reflexivity and ethical research practice are also addressed.

Chapter 4: The Data Analysis and Findings outline the analytical strategy employed together with the research findings of the primary data collection. The findings are discussed under the main themes which emerged in the data.

Chapter 5: The Discussion presents a critical interpretation and synthesis of the research findings and the literature reviewed pertaining to this extended study and the previous study (Fallon, 2013).

Chapter 6: The Conclusion to the research summarises the main findings in the study and outlines recommendations in terms of practice, policy and future research.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the research topic and positioned the researcher's interest and justification for the study. A synopsis of the research methodology advises the reader on how the data was collected to inform the study. The aims and objectives for the study have also been stated together with a structural plan of the thesis. The next chapter reviews literature pertinent to the study.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The aim of the literature review is to analyse and synthesise material already researched and relevant to this research study (Thomas, 2009). A review of the literature is fundamental to the researcher gaining an in-depth understanding of the research area, to learn from other researchers and the opportunity to learn about the theoretical and methodological approaches used previously (Bryman, 2004). Findings from the literature review can also help substantiate outcomes in the research findings or raise interesting questions (ibid.). As this research is an expansion of the previous study (Fallon, 2013), it seeks to provide an in-depth examination of outcomes for clients following a guidance helping intervention. For the purposes of this literature review, research material pertaining to adult guidance counselling and helping techniques have been gleaned from primary texts, academic journals, policy documents, related websites and conference proceedings. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the policy and practice which has shaped the development of adult guidance provision in the Irish adult education sector to date. The disbandment of the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and the very recent establishment of the Education and Training Boards (ETB) are discussed. Guidance counselling in adult education and the role of the guidance counsellor in the Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) is addressed. The second section examines transitions related to individuals who seek guidance and the interventions used by the adult guidance counsellor. The final section presents an appraisal of some of the interventions used in the helping relationship including the conventional Ali and Graham (1996) framework, career constructivism, Chaos Theory and the alternative approach of NLP.

### **2.1 Lifelong Guidance Counselling: Policy and Practice**

This section examines the union of policy and guidance, guidance counselling in the adult education arena, the development of adult education in Ireland and the role of the guidance counsellor therein.

### 2.1.1 Policy Field

Ireland is a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since 1961 (OECD, 2004). The OECD emphasises fairness and accessibility to work and social protection. Groups susceptible to marginalisation have been identified with focus shifted towards a “basic education and vocational training” for all (OECD, 2013, p.17). Philips and Eustace (2010) state that the ability of guidance to assist in the achievement of social equity goals is recognised by the OECD, the European Union and the Department of Education and Science in Ireland. The increasing number of member countries and continuing globalisation requires citizens to be proactive about their skills and training to equip them to meet labour market demands (OECD, 2008). Watts (1996) explains how guidance and politics are inextricably linked:

Careers education and guidance is a profoundly political process. It operates at the interface between the individual and society, between self and opportunity, between aspiration and realism. It facilitates the allocation of life chances.

(Watts, 1996, p. 351)

Policy discourse on quantifiable economic outcomes continues to be questioned in the literature. As the adult guidance service is funded by the Irish government, on the one hand it is viewed as an object of public policy, and on the other hand it is acknowledged to benefit the individual and society (Watts, 1996). Watts (1996) is critical of the policy makers who believe the guidance function is to attend to labour market goals. Public policy makers across all OECD nations require career guidance to make an extensive contribution to the objectives of public policy and social equity (OECD, 2004). The tightening of resources is a challenge for all the stakeholders whilst striving to achieve a balance between cost efficiency and rewarding outcomes (OECD, 2013). The *economic yardstick* is limiting and fails to consider the many aspects of guidance, counselling and ethics at the expense of quality outcomes (Murphy, 2010; Plant, 2004). Increasingly, government representatives from OECD member states express the need for individuals to develop skills to manage their own careers throughout the lifespan (OECD, 2008). However, Sultana (2011) argues there are times when people need help and encouragement and questions the role of public policy in guidance in terms of “whether the state looks at us as client, user or customer of services on the one hand, or as citizens on the other” (ibid, p.183). He advocates an all-embracing approach which “places the dignity and welfare of

citizens first” (ibid., p.184). Herr (2003) believes certain functions of guidance counselling in helping clients goes unnoticed by policy makers; reducing anxiety, controlling annoyance, resolving conflict, reframing unhappy events, negotiating indecision and addressing groundless thinking regarding careers. Biesta et al. (2011, p.4) concur and are critical of the “broad agenda for learning” being “too easily reduced to a narrowly economic conception” at the expense of valuable learning that can promote softer outcomes (ibid.). Conversely, Herr (2003, p.16) encourages a collective approach by policy makers and guidance practitioners in “cooperatively seeking the most credible outcomes of career counselling”.

The OECD review of guidance in Ireland in 2002 reported “a strong core of committed guidance professionals” (OECD, 2002, p.3). The National Guidance Forum (NGF) was established in 2004 to address some of its findings (NGF, 2007). The NGF (2007) proposed national lifelong guidance to be developed under four frameworks (1) national lifelong guidance; (2) a competency framework for guidance practitioners; (3) a quality framework for guidance services; and (4) national and local organisational structures. These frameworks help to support and promote self-direction in both learning and career planning for the dual benefit of empowering the individual and contributing to the prosperity of the nation (Cedefop, 2008).

The National Development Plan (NDP 2007-2013) was committed to investing in and increasing access to education, training and guidance (NGF, 2007, p.192). Post 2013, it is evident that the six-year NDP has failed to adequately deliver on this as a consequence of government austerity measures with adult education and the guidance service experiencing cutbacks in funding, resources and a moratorium in recruitment (Hearne 2012; Stokes 2010). Therefore, incongruence exists among the aims and objectives of policy makers (Daugherty 2008 cited in Galvin, 2009; Galvin, 2009). The Cedefop (2010) believe policy makers need to respond to the effects of the recession by implementing interventions to support young people to complete the education and training necessary for entry to the labour market. Guidance support and counselling in alliance with all of the stakeholders is fundamental to transitioning these young people to reach their full potential and contribute to society (ibid.).

## 2.1.2 Guidance Counselling in a Changing Economic Landscape

Milner (1974) describes counselling in education:

as the interaction developing through the relationship between a counsellor and a person in a temporary state of indecision, confusion or distress, which helps that individual to make his own decisions and choices, to resolve his confusion or cope with his distress in a personally realistic and meaningful way, having consideration for his emotional and practical needs and for the likely consequences of his behaviour.

(Milner, 1974, p.14)

The career pathways of today have changed significantly to those of the recent past and evidence suggests that vocational metamorphosis will continue into the future (Watts and Kidd, 2000). In the UK context, Hughes (2013) describes the impact of cultural economic changes in relation to guidance and employment with strong competition for jobs yet a lack of appropriate skills. The traditional unskilled and semi-skilled jobs have been replaced by advances in technology and the job for life has disappeared (ibid.). Watts and Kidd (2000, p. 499) espouse “meeting the needs of individuals engaged in lifelong learning and in more diverse career patterns” by dispensing with the archaic to embrace new approaches to helping. According to Oliver and Spokane (1988), the positive effects of guidance counselling are absolute although different types of interventions may be more effective for some over others.

The reported decrease in unemployment is welcome, but the reality is that 11.8% of the Irish workforce is still unemployed and particularly affecting low skilled workers, migrant workers and men (NESC, 2011). The OECD (2013) recognises marginalisation and discouragement as barriers to progression for our youth, the *lost generation*. It focuses on getting young unemployed job ready and trained to participate in the knowledge economy. Guidance counselling is fundamental to support and empower at-risk youth to return to education and employment (DES, 2000; OECD, 2004; Hearne, 2005; Cedefop, 2010, Sultana, 2011).

Guidance outcomes have been the topic of much debate for over twenty five years and the concepts of guidance outcomes vary amongst stakeholders (Killeen, 1996). The demand for guidance is growing, however, Hearne (2005, p.4) highlights reporting inadequacies which fail to quantify the contribution guidance makes with disregard for “progression” as a uniquely “individual experience”. To fully comprehend the efficacy of career

interventions, we need to appreciate “the sociocultural and physical environments in which our clients must implement their choices” (Spokane et al., 2003, p.455). Collaboration and joined-up thinking between the policy makers and stakeholders is pivotal to assist the “learning-to-work transition”; much of this is down to funding allocation for guidance (Cedefop, 2010, p.138).

### **2.1.3 The Development of Adult Guidance in Ireland**

The Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) was formed in 2000 by the Department of Education and Science (DES) establishing 39 adult educational guidance services in Ireland (Philips and Eustace, 2010). The services were based within the national Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) with an additional service in Waterford Institute of Technology (DES, 2000). However, the recent Education and Training Boards Act 2013 enacted the establishment of 16 Education and Training Boards to replace the 33 dissolved VECs. SOLAS was formally established in 2013 under the DES, this involved the dissolution of FAS with all its activities being transferred to the ETBs. The main function of SOLAS is to lead the further education and training sector in Ireland (Aontas, 2013). The former VECs merged under new entities and each of the sixteen ETBs is a statutory body with its own corporate status which will continue to manage and operate second level schools, further education colleges, prison education centres and adult and further education centres to deliver training and education programmes (ibid.).

Adult guidance sector is positioned within this changed landscape to support individuals over 16 years with little or no education and specifically target those with low literacy, unemployed, basic skills, disadvantaged men/women, lone parents and carers (NCGE, 2012). Travellers, the homeless, substance misusers, ex-offenders, people with disabilities and people from other countries who require English language and literacy supports are also deemed to need support (ibid.). The National Guidance Forum (NGF, 2007) states the Irish Government holds a holistic view of guidance for the individual, defining it as follows:

Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social, and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society.

(NGF, 2007, p. 6)

The specific target groups of the AEGI are ALCES (Adult Literacy Community Education Scheme), VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) and community education programmes such as BTEI (Back to Education Initiative) (NCGE, 2012). Former residents and their families of specified institutions such as the Magdalene Laundries and orphanages are also entitled to adult guidance (Philips and Eustace, 2010).

The AEGI offers a free, confidential guidance service to adults and provides unbiased information on education pathways, one-to-one guidance and group guidance to help people make informed educational, career and life choices (AEGI, 2012). The main thrust of the service is to provide guidance to empower people to seize opportunities for second chance education, further education and return to work (DES, 2000). Recent statistics report over 16,000 people availed of one-to-one guidance and over 20,000 others were met in a group setting during in a one year period (<http://www.ncge.ie>). Philips and Eustace (2010) reported low levels of people with literacy difficulties accessing guidance together with low encounters from community education and BTEI. Outreach provision is among the services operated by the AEGI to make the service accessible to people in danger of marginalisation (AEGI, 2012). Hearne (2012) is concerned with not only promoting client resilience but maintaining practitioner resilience in a climate where resources are scarce and demand for service consumption is increasing.

The next section will discuss the role of the guidance counsellor in the AEGI service.

#### **2.1.4 Role of the Guidance Counsellor in Adult and Further Education**

Kidd (2006) refers to guidance as a blanket term to encompass the many roles and activities of the guidance counsellor. The guidance counsellor works with people in the uniqueness of their situation throughout the lifespan; using the integrated model of guidance - personal, social, educational and vocational counselling (NCGE, 2012). The role of the guidance counsellor within the AEGI is to “assist people to make choices about their lives and to make transitions consequent on these choices” (DES, 2000, p.156). In the context of adult education, the NGF (2007) proposes a range of individual and collective activities to be delivered under the aegis of guidance as depicted in Table 2.1 on the next page.

Table 2.1 Activities of a guidance counselling service

1. <b>1. Information</b> Access to information on colleges, further education, training courses, careers and advice on funding opportunities	7. <b>Advocacy</b> Established links and access to referral and support organisations and advocate for the client where appropriate
2. <b>2. Assessment</b> Exploration of skills, interests and goals in life. Identification of barriers and issues impeding progress	8. <b>Feedback</b> Utilising feedback from clients to address gaps in services
3. <b>3. Advice</b> Helping the client to interpret information and making informed recommendations where appropriate	9. <b>Mentoring</b> Use of appropriate mentoring for clients
4. <b>Counselling</b> Helping clients to express thoughts, feelings on issues and to explore options and outcomes using the integrated model of guidance	10. <b>Networking</b> Liaising with established links of employers, education providers and colleagues in relevant agencies and bodies to provide support for the client
5. <b>Teaching/Careers Education</b> Empowering the client in job search skills, CV preparation, study skills, interview techniques and assistance with application forms.	11. <b>Managing</b> The co-ordination and development of human and physical resources to provide an effective guidance service to meet client needs and promote positive outcomes
6. <b>Enabling</b> Supporting clients to liaise with agencies or in the pursuit of work experience	12. <b>Innovating Systems Change</b> Remaining positive and supportive of change to promote and improve service delivery

(Source NGF, 2007, p.23)

This range of activities outlined above acts as a guide for practitioners to deliver an effective, client-centred service to meet the needs of the service users (NGF, 2007). The recession and the consequential effects is a challenging backdrop for the delivery of a career guidance service and when all options have been defeated in terms of opportunities and employment, the only resource left to work on may be the coping strategies of the individual (Watts, 1996). The more exposed cohorts to “labour market failure” need the nurture and support of the guidance counsellor to help carve out a career path and “help them realise and make the most of their potential” (Hughes, 2013, p.24). Reid (2006, p.27) states “counsellors need new ways of working with their clients”, and Bimrose and Brown (2013) outline why this is so:

The career biographies of adults are seldom linear. They often involve elements of learning, personal growth, regression, recovery, and perhaps further development as individuals move between images of what they are, had been in the past or think they might become.

(Bimrose and Brown, 2013, p.283)

The complex nature of transition for adults is discussed in the next section.

## 2.2 Adult Career Development and Transitions

Almost two decades ago, Giddens (1996, p.243) explained that globalisation was impacting on our existence to the extent that “we all have to construct our lives more actively than ever was the case before”. It is no longer an expectation to have a job for life or opportunities for progression with a particular employer (Bobek et al., 2013). According to Field (2010, p.xvii) transitions throughout the life course are a reality of late modernity with “heightened policy interest” in how people are supported to make choices. Ecclestone et al. (2010) concur that transitions are part and parcel of life and further explain that people dependent on social welfare payments are an activation priority. The 2012 figures for transitions in the Irish labour market report 130,000 unemployed moved to employment; 120,000 in employment became unemployed with a further 300,000 moving each way between inactivity and employment (Behan et al., 2013). Interestingly, up on 250,000 transitions occurred within employment, either due to change of employer or change of occupation (ibid.).

The guidance counsellor is working to ground the client to determine where they are at in their lives and to promote personal “responsibility for their future whatever the circumstances” (Ali and Graham, 1996, p.128). The boundaryless career is described in terms of frequency of job change, making moves within or out of the company and taking on contract work (Sharf, 2010). “The protean career is one that emphasizes a self-directed approach to the career, and a career that is driven by one’s own values” (Briscoe and Hall, 2006, p.5). Sugarman (2001) defines transitions as life events which happen over a period of time and are chronicled by a history and an outcome. People’s experience of transitions between education, training and work are less linear than ever before demanding skills development throughout the lifespan (Sultana, 2008). Clients are seeking guidance on their experience of transitions and they need support on how best to embrace the *boundaryless* and *protean* career path (Sharf 2010). According to Bobek et al. (2013, p.653) “counselors can play a critical role in helping adults adapt and navigate successfully through these transitions”. Barriers such as basic education, a low-skilled work history, lack of job opportunities and financial constraints can culminate to leave people feeling *trapped*, impeding career transition (ibid.). O’Connell et al. (2009) believe that the profile of the marginalised remains unchanged no matter what the economic situation, therefore, policy makers should easily identify those at risk of long term unemployment.



Unemployment among men in Ireland has remained a gender issue since before the recession and a 2013 figure remains stable at over 70% (Kelly and McGuinness, 2013). Gender issues also affect women who remain long-term unemployed to include “increases with number of children, literacy/numeracy difficulties, a history of unemployment and casual employment status” (O’Connell et al., 2009, p.3). Women who are married or separated are also more susceptible to remaining unemployed as opposed to those with a high-earning spouse, a third level qualification and good health (ibid.).

Transitions are not conceived to be age-related and causation and our perception of the event define the type of transition (Bobek et al., 2013, Sharf, 2010). Exposure to change is processed in a very individual way dependent upon our stage of development; what is devastating for one person may be an opportunity for another (Sharf, 2010). Schlossberg’s (1984) framework identifies four key transitions. anticipated, unanticipated, “chronic hassles” and non-events. Anticipated transitions are planned, most often to seek advancement or further opportunity (Bobek et al., 2013). Redundancy is considered an unanticipated transition and once it presents, it is up to the individual to deal with the situation (Sharf, 2010). Chronic hassles manifest in a variety of ways, for instance, long commutes or oversees travel can impede the work-life balance of the individual (ibid.). A non-event is whereby expectations remain unfulfilled, be it promotion, job transfer or entry into or out of employment (ibid.). Therefore, the person has to resign themselves that a desired change has not occurred (Sugarman, 2001). Furthermore, voluntary and involuntary transitions occur (Hopson and Adam, 1977). Contrary to its meaning, an involuntary change can be both optimistic and opportunistic and theory suggests that such a change can work to the advantage of women in a family setting (Sharf 2010).

Schlossberg et al. (1995) posits that the capacity to cope is dictated by the individual’s strengths or weaknesses in relation to *Situation, Self, Support and Strategies*. An individual’s perception of the event impinges on how they assess their circumstances (Sugarman, 2001). Factors such as timing in one’s life, duration, influence and level of anxiety determine the *situation*. A person’s considered strengths and weaknesses of *self*, depend on the persons stage of development, gender, health and financial situation. A person’s outlook affects ability to cope; therefore positivity and self-efficacy are powerful coping mechanisms. Relationships, family, friends, community and work all form a *support* network and a cohesive network lends huge support to an individual in transition

or crises. *Strategies* include how we respond to a situation either by taking action, gathering information, avoidance and the way in which we think (Summers 2002). A range of strategies can help people cope more effectively (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Sugarman (2001, p.161) explains coping strategies vary in response to the situation and believes “adult life can be seen as a continuous process of coping” with transitions throughout the lifespan.

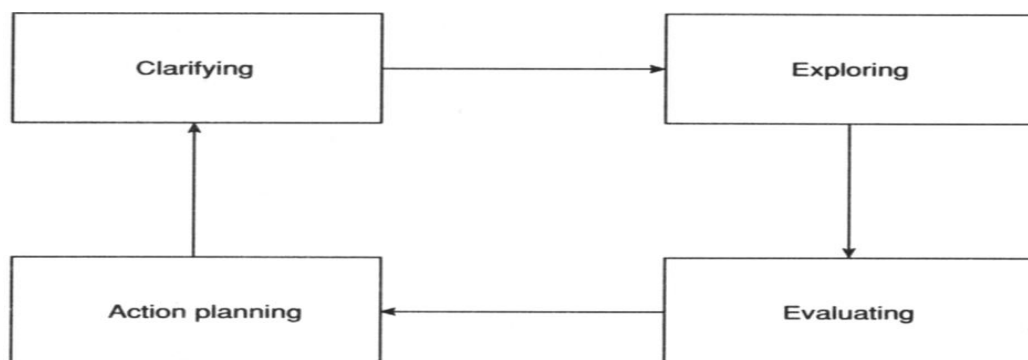
## 2.3 Theoretical Interventions and Frameworks in Adult Guidance Counselling

Corey (2005) suggests that a range of strategies are necessary in counselling interventions because clients can present with diverse problems. Guidance counsellors use approaches and techniques to suit their own style of helping and the needs of clients (Kidd, 2007). Savickas (2011a, p.13) endorses the usefulness of traditional approaches; however, he espouses “new practices” to meet the needs of clients negotiating unpredictable work environments.

### 2.3.1 Stage Theory and the Guidance Interview Model

Guidance counsellors use a number of guidance counselling theories and interview frameworks to support their work with clients. One of the primary models used in practice is Ali and Graham’s (1996) guidance interview framework, inspired by Gerald Egan’s Skilled Helper. It emphasises the significance of using a model to provide a solid structure for the client as he/she negotiates the career planning process. Roger’s person-centred core conditions are fundamental to the effectiveness of this four stage model to develop empathy and prepare the client to “be open and to take some personal risks” (Ali and Graham, 1996, p.47) *See Fig.2.*

Figure 2.1 The Model for a Counselling Approach



(Ali and Graham, 1996, p.46)

The clarifying phase sets the scene, fosters empathy, follows the client's story and leads the counsellor to make an initial assessment (Ali and Graham, 1996). This stage involves the assessment of vocational maturity. Vocational maturity relates to "self-knowledge, job knowledge, decision making and transition skills" (ibid., p.92). The assessment in stage one of the model is internal. The guidance counsellor explores internal observations around vocational maturity during the collaborative process of drawing up and re-examining the contract in the exploring phase to provide focus, eliminate ambiguity and to ensure issues of priority are within the expertise of the guidance counsellor. The contract is revisited at times during the evaluating phase to keep the helping process realistic and as anticipated. Adept summarising is used to contextualize the client's story thus far, to help them explore their options and any underlying concerns (ibid.). This facilitates the client to logically move forward and to use a metaphor, *see the wood from the trees*. Working within a framework can be grounding for the guidance counsellor as they can easily identify the avenues considered and this makes it easier to recognise when "expertise" from outside agencies is warranted; as a consequence referral may need to be discussed at any stage in the process (ibid., p.17). The final stage of the model should be decisive and action orientated. The guidance counsellor works with the client to outline tasks to achieve in between sessions and goals towards the final outcome (ibid.).

The provision of guidance on education and careers can be difficult where there may be no immediate employment opportunities or viable jobs (Behan et al., 2014). It is vital that the client is aware of the pitfalls and fully involved in action planning to the extent of "owning" the goals (Ali and Graham, 1996, p.57). The person-centred approach allows the guidance counsellor to walk alongside the client, taking into account their needs, skills, desired outcomes and career related issues (Hearne, 2007). The model is not without its limitations and Kidd (2006) suggests that stage models can be overly prescriptive in counselling. However, Wosket (2006) believes these problems are mostly due to poor engagement by the counsellor.

### **2.3.2 Career Construction Theory**

A staged model does not always work for clients in difficulty, hence the guidance counsellor needs to be aware of other theoretical orientations such as career construction

and narrative approaches. Savickas et al. (2009, p.240) explain that a “slack and stable labor market will embrace the idea of career stages whereas these stages are no longer functional in a tight and changing labour market”. According to Hearne (2007, p.1), “subjectivist epistemologies that reflect the nature of individual career progression in a constantly changing environment” focuses on “the process rather than the outcome, and challenges the traditional stage-based views of human development”. Reid and Scott (2010) suggest the use of narrative counselling as *another string to the bow* to revive the counselling process. In career construction theory, Savickas (2011a, pp.15-18) wishes to empower the client to construct a “self” and create an “identity” to become equipped for continuous change. It is the role of the guidance counsellor to facilitate clients to foster their “life trajectories” through emphasising and encouraging “human flexibility, adaptability, and life-long learning” (Savickas et al., 2009, pp.240-41). Savickas et al (2009) explain how the career construction counselling model contrasts with stage theories:

By engaging in activities in diverse roles, individuals identify those activities that resonate with their core self. Through activity, along with verbal discourse about these experiences, people construct themselves.

(Savickas et al., 2009, p.241)

According to Savickas’s theory, the guidance counsellor uses astute questioning about *role models, magazines, favourite story, mottos and early recollections* (2011a). Guidance counsellors listen to the story to determine the pertinent details and collaboratively with the client work to identify problems, set them in context and facilitate the client to reflect, interpret and piece together a meaningful career narrative (Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas, 2011b). The main focus of narrative career counselling is whereby the counsellor can “change viewpoints to progressively focus a client's initial broad story on the central occupational plot and career theme” (Savickas 2011b, p.179). The pinnacle of narrative intervention is achieved when the client begins to view their situation including barriers from different angles as described by Savickas et al. (2009):

Problem resolution and client change occurs as the client crystallizes new anticipations and articulates a possible self that before the intervention had only been vaguely sensed.

(Savickas et al., 2009, p.247)

Both paid and unpaid work is considered in terms of career and this is heartening for stay-at-home mums and dads who off-ramped to look after their children and hope to re-enter

the workforce (Sharf, 2010; Stebleton 2010). The Chaos Theory of Careers (CTC) is embedded in career construction and will be described in the next section (Savickas, 2011a).

### **2.3.3 Chaos Theory of Careers**

A significant part of life is “determined by chance and chaos” as it is not possible to control every aspect of living (Sugarman, 2001, p.74). Therefore, coping with “disorder” is not a new occurrence, however, somewhat more pronounced in present times (ibid., p.74). Barnes et al. (2011, p.311) explain chaos theory in terms of recognising the complexities of life and that of the individual while understanding that “a wide range of different influences affect career decision making” as well as the significance of a “chance” encounter influencing “career choices”. Pryor et al. (2008, p.316) state that to provide a client “with opportunity without strategy will lead to frustration and guilt”. CTC encompasses a broad approach to career development “that includes both probability and possibility thinking” (ibid., p.315). This contrasts with the matching process for jobs described as belonging in the last century (Bimrose et al, 2008; Barnes et al, 2011). CTC postulates that “complexity, change, chance and construction” all interconnect (Bright and Pryor, 2001, p.163). People’s behaviour is likened to “fractal patterns” when using chaos theory in counselling, this involves practitioners “trying to get an understanding of the person’s fractal – their dynamic, complex, and ever-changing but self-similar patterns” (ibid., p.165). This is achieved through listening to the clients’ story, psychological testing and new techniques specific to CTC (ibid.).

### **2.3.4 Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)**

For the purposes of this study, NLP is being examined as an alternative approach for use in adult guidance counselling. NLP was developed in the early seventies in California and evolved from modelling human behaviour (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000). It is based on a framework called the Meta Model which considers the whole person through neurological processes (neuro), language, (linguistic) and learned behavioural strategies (programming) (Dilts et al, 1980, p.2). The NLP approach to helping evolved through observation and modelling of successful therapists (Fritz Perls; Virginia Satir; Milton H. Erickson) working with their clients to effect positive change (Bandler, 1993). Clients who overcame their problems were also modelled and when they had figured out the strategy used by these

people, they tested it on others with similar problems achieving both successful and immediate results (ibid). Modelling of accomplished people further developed their strategies for working with clients (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000). The three processes of modelling are generalization, distortion and deletion, all of which are helpful dependent on the extent to which they are used (ibid.). Generalization is how beliefs are created, deletion is attention to some things with total exclusion of others and distortion alters data to fit our preconceptions or perceptions (ibid). Dilts and DeLozier (2000) state only 20% of our comprehension comes directly from external cues while 80% comes from pre-existing memories, beliefs and filters.

While the use of NLP has been steadily increasing, it has many critics with a low uptake for use in educational settings (Tosey and Mathison, 2010). However, despite the absence of a professional body to regulate the practice, little empirical research and much debate on its theoretical foundations, there is a strong body of support for NLP (Carey et al., 2010; Craft, 2001; Day, 2008; Tosey and Mathison, 2010). Through appropriate training, NLP practitioners use techniques and strategies to respond to problems identified through the speech used by clients (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000). The model recognises that individuals function using their own representation of the world which can be somewhat removed from reality and thus ambiguity can arise (ibid.). People learn behaviours which provide a sense of security, but the difficulty arises when certain behaviours no longer work and people are reluctant to change learned behavioural patterns (Bandler, 2008). NLP uses a number of intervention techniques to reconstruct behaviours, thus enabling clients to expand their options and ultimately the opportunity to make the best choice (ibid.). Typical NLP interventions include: questioning, listening, visualisation, anchoring, reframing, study of body language, a focus on boundaries, awakening and creating awareness (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000).

### **2.3.5 An appraisal of NLP techniques and similar strategies used in Conventional Guidance**

Rowan (2002) describes three ways to relate to clients, namely the instrumental, the authentic, and the transpersonal way. He categorises NLP under the instrumental way, a school of thought whereby the client who has to be cured is treated akin to a machine and by using appropriate techniques, a positive outcome should be achieved (ibid.).

Alternatively, conventional counselling methods are categorised under the authentic way whereby the person-centred counsellor is dubious of curing someone, rather, they are with the client using a Rogerian approach to helping (ibid.).

**Questioning** is the principal technique of the NLP Meta Model and is fundamental to exploring “the limiting verbal maps presented by clients” (Bandler, 2008, p.1043). Astute questioning by the NLP Practitioner provides clarification while inviting the client “to participate in, enrich and better understand” their life experiences (ibid, p.1043). Similarly, the use of questioning is also one of the predominant strategies used in career construction theory to elicit response to the stimulus questions in the career story interview (Savickas, 2011a). Ali and Graham (1996) encourage open questioning and probes in their counselling skills but only on what the client is talking about, to question outside of that can belittle what has been said.

**Listening** is paramount in all helping interventions. Dilts and DeLozier (2000) believe good listening skills to be of dual benefit to the NLP practitioner and the client; the practitioner building the skills over time is becoming more resourceful and more confident. The client realises the value of being listened to by being afforded the opportunity to talk uninterrupted and come to much conclusions for themselves in this way during conventional guidance (McLeod, 2011; Reid, 2006; Savickas, 2011a). Miller (2006), who believes solution-focused counselling to be constructivist, explains how these approaches incorporate adaptations to meet clients’ needs effectively and this includes NLP. Furthermore both constructivist and solution-focused counselling perceive people to construct their own reality based on what they know and their life experiences (ibid.). NLP is based on this premise that we negotiate our own representation of the world (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000).

**Anchoring** the client by visualising a particular image or touch is achieved through facilitating them to find “a reference point that helps to stabilise a particular internal state”; this becomes the anchor to empower the client and prevent drifting (ibid., p.9). **Visualisation** feeds into every aspect of NLP forming a specific mental image to change behaviour and improve performance (ibid.). This strategy is used in constructivist solution-based approaches also to help the client envision their preferred future (Miller,

2006). Egan (2007, p.255) argues “there is great power in visualizing outcomes” to assist in “exploring possibilities for a better future”.

**Reframing** is a strategy used in positivist and narrative counselling and also employed by NLP Practitioners. McLeod (2011, p.58) explains “the counsellor is not dismissing the client’s definition of the situation, but is offering a reframed understanding” of what the client has already contributed. NLP is cognisant of healthy **boundaries**; a client who is aware of their boundaries will find it easier to deal with situations while others need help to protect themselves or extend their possibilities (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000). Analysing **body language** can provide vital information on the clients’ inner well-being. A person who is anxious may exhibit tension, obvious through “tensing up the muscles in ones’ face and shoulders” (ibid., p.128). **Awakening** is a strategy used by the NLP Practitioner to support the client “to grow” while **awareness** involves attending to both the inner and outer states of the person with the overall aim of expanding their map of the world (ibid., p. 73). This is somewhat similar to working on the narrative to change perspectives as in career construction theory (Savickas, 2011a).

## 2.4 Summary of the Literature

The AEGI services are operating against a backdrop of change within the ETBs and the guidance counsellor must consider alternative yet appropriate techniques to help clients navigate new career trajectories within the constraints of service delivery (Hawthorn, 1996; Kidd, 1996; Savickas, 2011a). Savickas (2008, p.111) discusses the transformation of the guidance profession, “by shifting concentration from fostering career development to fostering human development through work and relationships”. Despite differences in the interventions discussed earlier, astute questioning, active listening, reframing and envisioning a preferred future, together with the core skills of person-centred counselling, are deeply embedded within the approaches. Work is a major contributor to a person’s sense of self-worth (Del Corso and Reh fuss, 2011, p.334). All of the above paradigms inspire hope, recognising the importance of well-being of the client and the powerful role education and guidance counselling can play to empower and support the client.

The body of support for guidance is evidenced through the literature and while policy should enable the efforts of guidance, services are evaluated “on achieving suitable economic outcomes to ensure funding” (Hearne, 2009, p.103). Bimrose and Hearne (2012)



anticipate difficulties whereby some policymakers expect people to be individually responsible for their own development and achievements. They argue that a purely quantitative approach to the measurement of guidance outcomes happens at the expense of subjective outcomes for clients which can only be assessed in qualitative terms (ibid). This research study seeks to assess intervention outcomes for the research participants both in terms of soft and tangible testimonies on returning to adult education and engagement in a helping process. As interpretivism is concerned with the meanings individuals bring to their situations, a qualitative approach will be used (Thomas, 2009). This will be discussed in the next chapter

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This literature review demonstrates the complexities involved for all the stakeholders in the adult and further education sector in Ireland. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology used to gain this insight from the research participants.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction**

Thomas (2009) explains the term methodology is not only a description of the methods used in a research study but also encompasses deliberation on the methods, how they were used and why these specific methods were chosen over another. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodological approach of this study, to examine the research questions, research methodology, methods of data collection and analysis. Further elements of the study will also be dealt with; namely reliability, validity, reflexivity and ethical concerns in relation to the study.

### **3.1 Research Questions of Study**

Amid the many reasons for carrying out research, the motives for undertaking this study was to discover the impact and effectiveness of guidance interventions and to inform best practice and curiosity in a phenomenon (Thomas, 2009). Bryman (2004, p.23) emphasises that “choices of research strategy, design, or method have to be dovetailed with the specific research question being investigated”. This research focused on the outcomes for clients following two different one-to-one interventions: the techniques used in NLP and the conventional forms of guidance counselling. It is not the desire of the researcher to campaign for any particular guidance counselling strategy, therefore a “disciplined, balanced inquiry, conducted in a critical spirit” will emanate from the study (Thomas, 2009, p.21). The research questions are a reconceptualization from the previous study (Fallon, 2013) with the intention to compare outcomes following NLP interventions and the conventional guidance interventions. The primary research question was:

*How effective are the helping interventions of NLP and conventional guidance for clients of an adult guidance service?*

A number of secondary questions were also identified:

1. *Has there been a change in the client's outlook since engagement in the intervention process?*
2. *How does the client now feel after the lapse of time since the intervention?*
3. *Did the specific interventions benefit the clients?*

4. *Would the clients recommend accessing the guidance counsellor in a one to one meeting?*

The most effective methodological approach was carefully deliberated upon to answer the research questions and the chosen paradigm will be discussed in section 3.2.

### **3.2 Research Methodology: Interpretive Case Study**

The findings of the earlier study, (Fallon, 2013) ascertained a lack of experiential research pertaining to NLP in the guidance counselling realm. This prompted a comparison of the efficacy of NLP and conventional interventions as helping techniques in adult guidance counselling (Neale et al, 2006). In this expanded study, the two adult client participants from the previous research were interviewed seven months post their NLP intervention along with two adult clients of the adult guidance service who experienced a guidance intervention in the same period last year (July 2013). This formed the basis for the research fieldwork in this study.

#### **3.2.1 Ontological Considerations of Study**

A paradigm is a school of thought on a particular subject. Research can be conducted using either one of the two philosophical approaches; positivist (quantitative) or interpretivist (qualitative) and the paradigm will be determined by the topic under investigation (Cohen et al, 2007). Tight (2003) highlights the divergence between the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Yet, both theories can be considered “a set of concepts” to present “the world in a particular way” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.14). Cohen et al. (2007) stress policy can heavily dictate the choice of research design which may not always serve the best interests of the research study. Nevertheless, the selection and rationale for choosing one over another must support the central philosophy of research in education and guidance counselling research (Tight, 2003).

McMahon and Patton (2006) perceive a paradigm to be a belief system which represents the view of the researcher. Ontologically, I was influenced by the interpretivist paradigm as this study revolved around people and how they construct their lives (Thomas, 2009). Hermeneutically, I was interested in learning about the subjective experiences of a group of participants through their eyes (Cohen et al., 2007; McMahon and Patton, 2006). Their

narratives were of great interest to me hence the research questions converged on the participants' unique experiences to reveal how past experiences can influence development and progression (Hearne, 2009). Interpretivism facilitated me to look at their worlds in different ways and to delve beneath the surface (Thomas, 2009). Epistemologically, the interpretivist model enabled me to see themes emerging from the data (ibid.).

Cohen et al. (2007, p.14) explain that neither positivism nor interpretivism exists "independently of us: they are indeed our inventions enabling us to acquire some understanding at least of the apparent chaos of nature". According to Ryan (2006) positivism "places faith in quantification" to facilitate "prediction" and "control" in the research. Consequently, Cohen et al. (2007, p.11) speculate that the positivist approach receives criticism for its measureable and mechanistic treatment of data with a disregard for the "immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena". Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.27) argues it ignore the "humanness" of participants and for favouring justification over discovery in the context of research. McMahon and Patton (2006, p.3) explain positivism "views the world as operating in much the same way as a machine" whereby the individual is expected to function and any problems encountered are attributed to the individual. Conversely, Ryan (2006, p.16) states "knowledge cannot be divorced from ontology (being) and personal experience". In contrast, Thomas (2009, p.75) describes interpretivism as a concern for people and "the way that they interrelate – what they think and how they form ideas about the world; how their worlds are constructed".

### **3.2.2 Interpretivism**

The interpretivist paradigm facilitates the study of humans and an understanding of the multiple realities of clients (Hearne, 2009). Thomas (2009) simplifies interpretivism in terms of the individual's unique meaning and experience of the world. This prompted the use of a qualitative research approach in this study. Robson (2007, p.44) explains the reason for its use is to focus "on the subjective experience of the individuals studied and seeks to understand and describe what happens to them from their own point of view". The approach permits direct observation of and immediate clarification from research participants and enables descriptive data (Thomas, 2009).

In contrast to positivist research, it may not be possible to use the results from an interpretivist study for generalisation to other populations; some theorists believe this to be a limitation. Mayring (2007, p.3) explains “our insight can only be a reconstruction of subjective perspectives of people in specific situations”. Thomas (2009) clarifies the researchers unavoidable position which could influence the findings; he advises the researcher to disclose their *positionality*, explain it but also to embrace the privilege. Findings may be opinionated by the subjectivity and bias of the researcher, however, the onus is on the researcher to provide rigor in the data (ibid.).

Bimrose and Barnes (2007) describe the interchanging transitions that individuals can experience: from employment to unemployment, from unemployment to education and education to employment. Savickas (2011a) explains that in order to provide effective helping for the client, practitioners assist clients to build and dismantle and put together their career story. Career construction theory is the catalyst to “making a self as a task” whereby the sequel to the career story is co-constructed by the practitioner and client (ibid., p.15). To this end, Killeen (1996) is a proponent of interpretivism in career construction theory commending guidance for helping people to cope and achieve a sense of self in less than stable work environments.

### **3.3 Research Design: Case Study**

Central to this research is a real-life phenomenon about the perceptions of adult clients of their experiences and outcomes following helping interventions. The various design frames of action research, ethnography, evaluation and the case study were examined to determine the most appropriate framework to underpin the study (Thomas, 2009). Consequently, the case study framework was chosen to facilitate the investigation of a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p.13). Action research may be more suitable for research practitioners planning to implement change (Thomas, 2009, p. 113). The limited timeframe for the study did not lend itself to ethnographic research. Evaluation research is used to measure effectiveness, this happened to a certain extent, however, for true evaluation to take place, the *before*, *during* and *after* needs to be evaluated; due to time constraints, it was not possible to do justice to evaluation research in this study (Cohen et al, 2007; Thomas, 2009). The researcher

simply wished to understand the efficacy of the helping interventions from the viewpoint of the individual clients and how the outcomes touched their lives.

Whilst Bryman (2004) states it is not wholly correct to say so, qualitative research and a case study framework are complimentary research methods. Case studies generate valuable, productive data essential to the examination of interventions such as NLP with the opportunity to explore the various aspects of the experience of guidance interventions (Thomas, 2009). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggest the prime concern in a case study is the object to be explored rather than the methodologies employed. The bounded system in this research study comprised of adult clients of one AEGI service for which the outcomes following engagement in the service were examined. According to Bryman (2004), case studies both generate and test theory. The research participants in this case study provided great insight to their experience of both NLP and conventional guidance interventions which enabled descriptive data to be gleaned to inform practice.

The greatest strength of a case study framework is the ability to record experiences in real life situations as they unfold (Cohen et al, 2007). The use of a descriptive case study in this research facilitated the explication of participants' experiences within the context of participating in further education. Interview questions prompted participants to reflect on, verbalise and give life to significant events in their lives and for some it was necessary to delve into long past experiences to make sense of their journey thus far. Yin (2009, p.4) describes this as "the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" being preserved when using case studies. One of the participants commented on the therapeutic value of the interview while another felt the interview reawakened the positive feelings experienced following the helping intervention last year. "Unexpected insights" were also experienced by the researcher and helped maintain interest in the study (Cohen et al., 2007, p.173). Limitations to case study research seeks justification of the value of small case studies to generate worthwhile data and a lack of rigour and poor analysis can lead to inaccurate reporting (Bell, 2010; Yin, 2009). When assessing outcomes over a space of time, much depends on the recall of the participants and may pose problems (Cohen et al, 2007). Also the use of implied understanding is inevitable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To combat this, the researcher worked hard "to report all evidence fairly" (Yin, 2009, p.14).

### **3.4 Method of Data Collection and Analysis**

The process of data collection can also be referred to as fieldwork and the methods used are considered as the practical tools to collect the information (Tight, 2003). Bell (2010) details the preparation, planning and decisions to be made prior to selection of the data collection method to produce comprehensive research data. Thomas (2009) advises it is important to carefully consider the appropriateness of the methodology and data collection methods. According to Bell (2010), qualitative research prompts the most effective methods to be employed. Face to face interviews with four adult clients was selected to collect the data in this study. Researchers must be cognisant of the timeframe to collect the data and the time allocated for participant interviews (ibid). While Bell (2010, p.118) recommends more than one method to collect the data, it is acknowledged that this may be unrealistic for “short-term researchers” as was the situation in this study.

#### **3.4.1 Gaining Access and Sampling**

This study was granted approval on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014 by the EHS Ethics Committee, University of Limerick. Approval and permission to conduct the research was received from the CEO of the ETB in which the AEGI service is positioned (Appendix A & B). Two cohorts of clients were involved in the sample for this study: (1) two clients from the previous research study (Fallon, 2013), and (2) two clients of the AEGI service who received a one-to-one conventional guidance intervention during the same period as the NLP intervention in 2013. The two participants from the previous study agreed to participate to explore outcomes after a seven month period (Appendix C, E). In order to access two new clients, the Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS) was used as an access tool to select clients from the database who had engaged in guidance counselling in the AEGI service in 2013.

Purposive sampling was used to select all clients (Cohen et al., 2007). According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.115), purposive sampling “is deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased”. However, as clarified by Robson (2007, p.99), this is quite acceptable “provided you make clear in your report what has been done”. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to new clients who met the selection criteria on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014 (Appendix D). The remaining four clients who responded to the invitation to participate

formed a waiting list in the event of attrition and they were subsequently notified that the waiting list had expired (Appendix H).

### **3.4.2 Individual Semi-Structured Interviews**

A face to face, semi-structured interview was chosen as the most suitable data collection method and conducted with each of the four participants in late February 2014. Thomas (2009) credits the semi-structured format as being flexible enough to expand where necessary whilst maintaining structure in the interview process. Two interview frameworks were devised; one set was used for the two participants of the previous study on NLP (Appendix F) and one set was used for the two participants who received the conventional form of guidance counselling (Appendix G). While the semi-structure allows freedom to change course, it should be treated as a “carefully controlled conversation” (Robson, 2007, p.74). Two other types of interviews can be used; structured and unstructured. A structured interview is likened to a questionnaire with “closed” questioning and limited opportunity to deviate from the interview framework as most of the initial work is done prior to the interview (ibid., p.73). Notwithstanding the quality of the data that can be collected in the unstructured interview, much work and thinking on the spot is required from the interviewer in the space of the interview time, hence “best avoided by novice researchers” (ibid., p.75).

Bell (2010, p.161) states that the interview process is unique over other methods of data collection as the “interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings”. Human contact prompts a more effective response from participants as opposed to other data gathering methods. Interviewees “will usually be energised to help by your physical presence” as evidenced in this research study (Thomas, 2009, p.160). The uniqueness of the interview also enables the researcher to watch what is happening, both verbally and non-verbally (ibid.). The encouraging “facial expressions, nods, and good eye contact” of the researcher together with reassuring prompts to continue helped the participants settle into the interview (Nelson-Jones, 2005, p.99). The core skills of guidance counselling; active listening, empathy and positive regard for the participants were used instinctively which helped to build rapport between the researcher and participants (ibid.). The participant also needs to know that the researcher is genuinely interested in their story for them to feel comfortable to continue, this was achieved by the



researcher actively “attending” to the participant by clarifying what was said and “offering a reframed understanding” where appropriate on aspects of the participants’ story (McLeod, 2011, p.58). Cohen et al (2007, p. 349) believe the interview process allows the participants “to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view”.

The use of open ended questions gave the researcher liberty to inquire a little further when appropriate, and similarly allowed the participants “freedom and spontaneity” in responding (Oppenheim, 2000, p.115; Bryman, 2004). This contributed to the richness of data collected (Thomas, 2009). In terms of limitations, the interview process is time consuming for both the interviewer and the interviewee and requires a commitment from all parties involved. The participants were “provided with a credible rationale for the research” by means of an information letter and the researcher highlighted the significance of the research with each of the participants regarding its contribution to practice in adult guidance counselling (Bryman, 2004, p.117).

### **3.4.3 Data Analysis Method**

The transcribed text from the interviews, field notes and excerpts from the research diary provided the data for analysis in this study. “Analysis is necessary because findings require evidence” (Ryan, 2006, p.94). Equally so, the richness of data collected can prove to be cumbersome when analysing qualitative interviews, therefore the constant comparative method and the use of theme mapping assisted the process in this study (Thomas, 2009). This will be described in more detail in Chapter Four.

### **3.5 Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research**

Validity and reliability are critical elements in both quantitative and qualitative research and while positivists are critical of their use in qualitative research, Cohen et al. (2007) pragmatically believe this can be refuted by attending to validity and reliability throughout the study. Maxwell 1992 (cited in Cohen et al. 2007) cautions against straining towards the positivists agenda to prove validity and reliability in qualitative research and opts to place more value on the genuineness of the research (ibid.). “The intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals” should be adequate; however,

Silverman 1993 (cited in Cohen et al.) is cited as contesting this assumption and campaigning for more rigor to be applied in qualitative research (ibid., p.135).

Bell (2010) states the importance of judiciously examining the method of data collection to ensure its reliability and validity. Reliability is described as the ability of a test to generate consistently comparable results in a stable environment and validity is determined by the capacity of a test to reach a convincing conclusion (ibid.). Thomas (2009, p.106) is sceptical of researchers efforts to prove reliability in qualitative research and argues that “in interpretative research you are interpreting on the basis of you being *you*, interviewing someone else being *them*”.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) conceive the trustworthiness of research is essential to evaluating its merit in a study. Table 3.1 depicts their four-point criterion for validity in this study (ibid).

Table 3.1 Four-point criterion for validity

<b>Conventional Inquiry</b>	<b>Interpretative Inquiry</b>
Truth Value (Internal Validity)	➤ Credibility
Applicability (Generalisability)	➤ Transferability
Consistency (Reliability)	➤ Dependability
Neutrality (Objectivity)	➤ Confirmability

(Source: Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.300)

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the principles for validity in interpretative inquiry are credibility (*validity*), transferability (*generalizability*), dependability (*reliability*) and confirmability (*objectivity*) of data. The dedication and honesty of the researcher to the research safeguarded the credibility of this study using meticulous data collection methods which were employed in the same manner with each participant (ibid.). Furthermore, the researcher was confident in the ‘truth value’ of the findings. Transferability was not an expectation, however, the knowledge and findings may be transferable in related backgrounds (Bryman, 2004). *Thick description* was achieved through the narratives of the participants from which the researcher endeavoured to set the scene for the reader whilst ensuring to uphold anonymity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is within the remit of

the reader to decide if the findings can be generalised to another situation (Bryman, 2004). The dependability and confirmability of the research was achieved through the critical reflexive use of keeping a research diary, expressive field notes, considered decisions regarding the research and frequent consultation with the research supervisor (Hearne, 2009; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To ensure validity, carefully planned methodological steps were taken for rigour in the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009).

### **3.6 Reflexivity in Guidance Counselling Research**

Creswell (2005) ascertains that the interpretative researcher holds no monopoly over research outcomes and it is the privilege of others to make their own inferences from the study. Allied to ethical principles in this study, a strong reflexive approach was taken throughout the research. Cohen et al (2007, p.171) use the analogy of researchers holding “themselves up to the light” as “they are part of the world they are investigating” and recommend that researchers should disclose themselves and their position in the research. The researcher is employed as a guidance counsellor in an AEGI service in another county. The study highlighted the universality of life issues for clients of the AEGI and the researcher could personally identify with some of the concerns of the participants through her own life experience (Corey Schneider et al, 2010). At times, the researcher had to desist from offering support or guidance as the rich descriptive data needed to come from the participants. The researcher was also struck by the personal growth and autonomy of the participants since engaging in adult education and guidance; a “soft outcome” sometimes overlooked in the pursuit of hard data and statistics (Bimrose, 2006).

Etherington (2004, p.31) explains the reader is provided with a richer understanding of the research topic within the context of a well-defined researcher stance, described as follows:

If we can be aware of how our thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social personal history informs us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe their conversation with us and write our representation of the work, then perhaps we can come close to the rigour that is required of good qualitative research.

(Etherington, 2004, p.31)

Reflexivity was achieved by the researcher through the use of a research diary to include reflective entries after each interview and personally transcribing and listening to the taped research interviews. Peer discussions with the research supervisor enabled clarification on aspects of the study and the researchers own position within it. The researcher became

aware of the benefits of reflexivity for the research participants as the two NLP participants commented on the therapeutic benefits of the research interview, to take time out to think and say their thoughts aloud.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations of Study**

A concern for ethics cannot be overlooked in research as every stage of the process is bounded by ethical considerations (Cohen et al., 2007). Sugarman (2001) cautions against any fast track methods which would jeopardise not only the ethical concerns but the safety of the participants involved. Thomas (2009) considers ethics as practicalities in the research process. Cohen et al. (2007, p.71) state “ethical regulations exist” on many facets: namely legal guidelines, university ethics committee, codes of ethics in professional and associate bodies and integrities of the researcher.

This research adhered to the legislative requirements of the UL Ethics Committee Review (January 2014). It was guided by the principles outlined by the National Centre of Guidance in Education (NCGE, 2008, p.2) which stipulates “respect for the rights and dignity of the person, competence, responsibility and integrity”. Sugarman (2001, p.51) affirms the need to consider the research the participants point of view and states “foreseeable threats to their psychological well-being, health, values or dignity should be eliminated”. With regard for the best interests of all the stakeholders, this study was conducted honestly and accurately in a transparent manner whilst ensuring not to exploit the participants at any time. The uniqueness of this expanded study was the engagement of a combination of previous and new research participants, hence the importance of gaining informed consent and assuring strict confidentiality and non-disclosure of identity at any time (ibid). While researchers are guided by ethical codes and guidelines, Sugarman (2001, p.53) stresses the importance of researchers “thinking through the ethical implications of their work”. The researcher in this study took time to debrief with each participant at the end of the interview and urged the participant to make contact with the AEGI guidance counsellor if they felt the need afterwards.

Robson (2007, p.64) believes it is necessary for the social researcher to satisfy ethical queries such as “have their rights, autonomy and sensitivities been respected?” Guidance counselling is primarily a helping profession and Milner (1974, p.14) explains that clients

seeking guidance support may be “in a temporary state of indecision, confusion or distress”. To ensure non-maleficence, appropriate care and attention was given to the cognitive and affective processes of the participants throughout the research (Cohen et al. 2007). The researcher was aware that the research interview may bring to the fore emotional issues for participants and consequently the need for reassurance and/or referral. For that reason, the participants were given an inclusive listing of support and counselling services in the local area with all contact details provided (listing withheld to uphold anonymity).

Confidentiality and anonymity was adhered to throughout with the integrity of the agreement and consent endorsed at all times (Bell, 2010). The consequences of the “costs/benefits” ratio evolves throughout the research process (Cohen et al, 2007, p.52). It may be some time before the participants realise the true value of their contribution to the study and informing adult guidance counselling practice. As a guidance counsellor, the feedback from the interviews copper-fastened belief in the effectiveness of ‘soft-outcomes’ to develop and enrich the lives of clients in adult guidance. Participation in research can be demanding on the participant’s time and energy and therefore, it was also pointed out to participants that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time. The researcher anticipated beneficence could be gained from participation in the study for the interviewees due to the therapeutic nature of the research; this was also stated as a positive outcome in the previous study (ibid.).

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the research methodology used in this case study including data collection and analysis methods. Attention was also given to matters concerning validity, reliability, reflexivity and ethics. Chapter Four will discuss the findings from the primary data in the case study.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the method of data analysis and the findings from the research interviews with four adult participants, all of whom were learners on the VTOS programme. Two were interviewed on outcomes experienced following individual NLP interventions and a further two participants were interviewed on outcomes following their experience of an adult guidance counselling session. An openness and willingness to share by the participants enhanced the research interview process and contributed to the richness of the descriptive data to help “understand the subjective world” fundamental to interpretive research (Cohen et al., 2007, p.21). According to Robson (2002), it is imperative to do justice to the rich data collected. The data will be presented under the themes of:

- (i) Outcomes from engagement in a guidance helping intervention and;
- (ii) A plan for the future.

Sub-themes which evolved therein will be described throughout. While each participants experience was unique, personal growth and an enriched life connect their stories.

### **4.1 Data Analysis Strategy**

The analysis of words is the hinge pin of the interpretivist paradigm (Thomas, 2009). Interpretivism encapsulates how people relate to each other, “and how they form ideas about the world; how their worlds are constructed” (ibid.). Four interviews with two sets of participants facilitated the interpretive research process. The researcher employed Thomas’ (2009) constant comparative method to identify ideas, arguments and comparisons in the data. The research interviews were transcribed and together with field notes, the recordings were repeatedly listened to during the transcription process as the initial method to become familiar with the data, the participants tone of voice and use of language (ibid.). The aim of data analysis is to cultivate rich, thick description, necessitating the typed transcripts to be reviewed many times to induce meaningful themes in the data. The process of inductive reasoning assisted correlations in the study through the narratives and observation of the four participants (Cohen et al., 2007). The researcher

got to know the individual research participants in this way through immersing herself in the data which eased the identification of patterns and meaningful data (Boyatzis, 1998). Inductive analysis is an organic process uninhibited by a preconceived framework or researcher agenda (ibid.). Thomas (2009) concludes that while evidences from induction are not absolute, they can be reinforced by an increase in observations and accounts of similar participant experiences.

Encoding the data was used to organise the information and identify themes. The encoding process is described by Boyatzis (1998, p.1) “as recognizing (seeing) an important moment and encoding it (seeing it as something) prior to a process of interpretation”. Thomas (2009) stresses the importance of being actually able to describe how ideas are connected. To assist with this, the researcher used network analysis to depict the themes and sub-themes (ibid.). Excerpts from the interviews are used to “illuminate and make vivid” the themes identified (Robson, 2007, p.131). The overarching themes and sub-themes that emerged in the research will be presented in the following sections as depicted in Fig. 4.1 below.

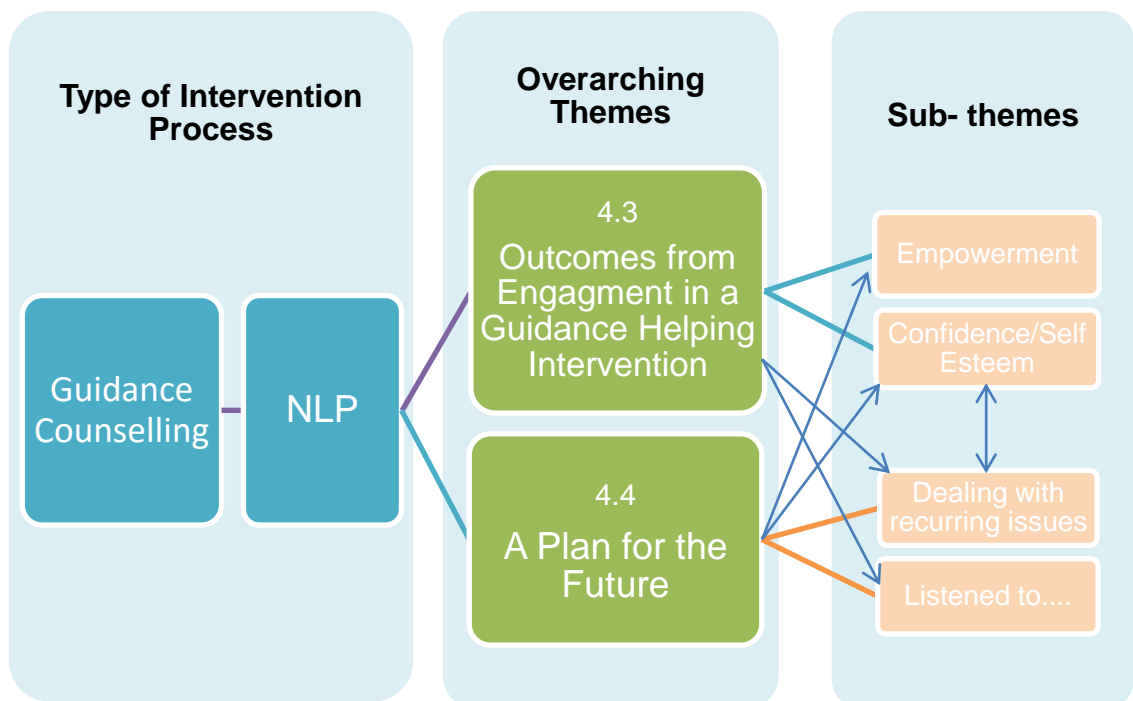


Fig. 4.1. Network Analysis – Themes and Sub-themes

The constant comparative method facilitated the identification of two main themes in the data:

4.3 Outcomes from engagement in a guidance helping intervention

4.4 A plan for the future

From the two main themes, four sub-themes emerged which will be discussed throughout the research findings. In order to achieve the aim of the research study to determine the efficacy of NLP and conventional methods of adult guidance counselling, the researcher decided to analyse the outcomes and future plans of the adult participants. This was facilitated by the participants as they all discussed the significance of the intervention for them and all participants have a plan for the future. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity. A summary of the participants profile is presented in the next section. *See Table 4.2 on page 38.*

## **4.2 Profile of Adult Participants**

A face to face interview was conducted with two male and two female participants. Niall, is Irish and in the 40-45 year age bracket. He worked in the construction industry until 2009. He was unemployed for two years prior to engaging in adult education. James is British and aged 49. He worked as a tiler and similarly became unemployed as a result of the crisis in the construction industry. He had been unemployed for a number of years before entering adult education. Niall and James were interviewed to assess outcomes following engagement in conventional guidance counselling.

Both female participants are Irish, in the 50-55 year age bracket and have had a long work history. Catherine worked extensively in the hotel and catering industry and had been a self-employed caterer prior to becoming unemployed. Breda worked for over 20 years in a factory environment and she became a stay at home mother after the birth of her child. They both entered adult education in 2011 and were interviewed to assess outcomes following engagement in NLP.

Table 4.2 provides further information on educational qualifications, current status and future plans of the four clients.



Client Pseudonym	Intervention June 2013	Nationality	Age Range	Gender	Current Education	Previous Employment	Current Status
Catherine	NLP	Irish	50-55	Female	FETAC Level 5 and 6	Self-employed caterer	Payroll and accounts
Breda	NLP	Irish	50-55	Female	Leaving Cert FETAC Level 5 and 6	Office duties in a factory	Year out (Course deferred)
Niall	One to One Guidance	Irish	40-45	Male	FETAC Level 3	Construction	Completing FETAC Level 5
James	One to One Guidance	British	45-50	Male	FETAC Level 5	Tiler	1 <sup>st</sup> year of Bachelor of Science in Computing (Hons) degree

Table 4.2 Client Profiles

### 4.3 Outcomes from Engagement in a Guidance Helping Intervention

This first overarching theme – will deal with the participants’ experiences under two separate headings; the experience of returning to adult education and the tangible outcomes of having engaged in adult education and helping interventions.

#### 4.3.1 The Experience of Returning to Adult Education

Three of the four participants had left school early. Contrastingly, Breda completed her Leaving Certificate, however, she did not perceive her second level education as a positive experience in her life. Quite the opposite in fact, she carried a lot of hurt right through her adult life which she attributes to her experiences in school. She also felt negative about her abilities as she revealed:

I automatically thought that I couldn’t do maths, that I was stupid, I was stupid at maths because that’s what was instilled in me as a young child and I, but then I realised all my life I used maths and I was well capable and then we had a brilliant teacher (name) there and she brought out the best in everybody.....[Breda].

It was only when Breda returned to education to complete a FETAC course through VTOS that she realised her capabilities and the impact of a nurturing and “brilliant teacher”. Catherine, Niall and James did not consider their early education to be a cornerstone of their life experiences either. For Catherine, an unfulfilled educational experience left an indelible mark on her life which resulted in her “always looking for something” with the belief “that everybody else thinks I should be more”.

Having successfully completed two years of adult education with a FETAC award, she is very proud of her “fantastic” results and states she:

would never have thought it that I would achieve those, that it was never going to come out of my head and actually what I put down was read and enjoyed and marked well, that was huge.....

Niall left school at sixteen. He stated he “wasn’t very academic at school”, yet later in the interview, he explained he may have had the potential except “I had other things going on in my life” and further clarified “I just didn’t work hard enough or apply myself or believe I could”. He considers that when you get a “second chance” through adult education, “you have more discipline in yourself, self-discipline”. He is confident of his abilities now, looking forward to completing his award and commencing third level education.

James received his early education in England and believes he “didn’t really have a good education” and his “experience of education was zero”. He attributes this to the socio economic class of his parents and rationalises his diminished chances of a good education and leaving school before he was fifteen:

If you were richer class, you got looked after better in school and if you were lower class, you didn’t get looked after in school, am, that is the reason I left school when I was fifteen, and for six months before that I wasn’t actually in school and I hadn’t told my parents.....

James was very enthusiastic of his experience of adult education in Ireland and gaining a Level 5 FETAC award. He describes how he explored varying options for study and future careers and is very proud to have secured his first CAO choice with a second option to study accountancy.

The adult education guidance counsellor works with the VTOS students in group sessions on a regular basis to provide help and support to move forward. Both James and Niall had the experience of a one to one guidance counselling session with the adult guidance counsellor in 2013. Niall commenced VTOS on a combined studies FETAC level 5. He enjoyed the subjects he was studying in year one, however, he was worried about the subject choice in year two. He did not have an interest in the particular subjects and was unsure of their relevance for him to pursue further study. He met with the guidance

counsellor to explore his options and found this helpful. “I had been thinking about Social Studies but I didn’t know where to go with that” as he explains:

I asked her about that and I was struck by how firm she was, I suppose I had been a carer with (name of organisation) and I’d like to go down that road and she thought too it would be a good career path for me.....and she gave me a lot of confidence to follow what I wanted to do, I suppose I was struck by that, how clear she was, if you really want to do something, well then do it, she made me realise that just because I didn’t pick the right course initially didn’t mean I couldn’t do what I wanted to do.....

This guidance process facilitated a transition for Niall to take up Social Studies for the second year of his FETAC award in a further education college.

James also had a one to one guidance session with the guidance counsellor. Whilst, “I’d often have a quick word with her when I needed to” last year he made an appointment with her “about problems at home”, “money problems” and further explains she:

Would help you chat about it and she would make you feel that little bit more relaxed, you know, even though, deep down you think to yourself, she’s told me something and it makes me feel better, it ain’t making it better because the problems are still there but talking to her.....it’s helped me look at the bigger picture.....more long term, step out of the situation for a bit in my head.....it’s good to off load.....

While James acknowledged that the guidance counsellor could not fix his problems, he felt “more relaxed” and able to cope with his situation. The tangible outcomes following engagement in adult education and helping interventions is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.3.2 The Tangible Outcomes of Having Engaged in Adult Education and Helping Interventions**

All four participants have developed lasting friendships through VTOS and regularly meet up with their peers. They greatly enjoy this support network and consider it an important element to the success of their adult education experience. Catherine is working part-time in payroll and accounts and enjoying every aspect of it, “it’s a training experience and its working and I’m loving it”. She feels she “would never have known I would be good at this only for VTOS”. She marvels at the opportunity she has seized explaining “I have the intelligence but I always felt I didn’t have it” and is very confident being “given stuff to do”. Catherine wonders if she would have realised the positive effects of returning to education if she had not engaged in an NLP intervention stating:

I might not have realised all I had going for me already and all I had achieved in the two years, it never felt like anything, it was only when he started putting things together and saying what my life was, it was like 'now Catherine, stop what you're thinking', I really was hard on myself.....but I have actually learned.....

Breda was delighted to be offered a place on a HE business studies course and chose to defer entry until September 2014. This was her plan as she wanted to wait until her daughter was a little older. She is very positive about her future and attributes this to successfully completing her FETAC awards and engaging in NLP. She too described her fears of returning to education and realises “I was more than capable when it came together, my confidence just needed to be boosted”. She loved the camaraderie of her peers on the course all learning together, supporting each other and figuring things out as they went along. Out of ten, she feels “my confidence is about 8.....that sounds great going from maybe 2”.

Niall is delighted that he opted to change course mid-way through his studies in VTOS and is confident that Social Studies is a right fit for him. He compares his experience of guidance to a road map for the future and in hindsight; he can retrace the steps he has followed over the past three years. He has found a great sense of “purpose” from engaging in adult education as he explains:

When you are unemployed, you're out of work, you're not meeting anybody really on a day to day basis and you have no routine, no purpose, so definitely adult education is a great way to meet new people and to be doing something, so I think, ah, I would recommend it to anybody.....[Niall]

Niall believes engagement with adult guidance has augmented his confidence and self-esteem over the three years and this was modelled by the guidance counsellor whereby the “confidence she has would rub off on you”. Niall found it very helpful to be set tasks towards achieving goals and refers to this throughout the interview as “a clear path to the future”, “a road map in front of you”, “gone through all those steps”. He recalls the “low point” of three years ago and can see the strides he has made in terms of his confidence, self-esteem, ability to express himself and contribute opinions. Overall, Niall reports feeling very positive.

With regard to the impact of returning to education on the learner's family, James provides insights on this issue. His wife recently began a part-time course, his young son is picking

up on the Spanish James is learning and he proudly states “everyone has got their head in the books now”. James feels he came a long way in the two years from when he first started in VTOS, he “had no intention of going to” third level. His interest in continuing with education was an organic process and he started to give various options serious consideration for career choice. He believes he was “about 60%” committed when he first began his adult education journey in VTOS and he admits to having “some way to go to get that 40%”. The input from guidance counselling as part of the curriculum and the support from tutors and peers helped him change perspective:

I suppose every time I made an excuse to make a negative, someone in there made a positive out of it and it just made me come forward and then it come to a stage, this is only early stages as well, it come to a stage where three months down the line, I started to think, this could be quite something.....[James]

Now he is 100% committed to following through on his dream to qualify with a BSc in Computing and he attributes this to the holistically enriching experience of adult education.

#### **4.4 A Plan for the Future**

All of the four clients had engaged in career planning over the period of their education in VTOS. Catherine, who had worked in catering all her life, had the opportunity to return to work in this area for five days per week. She would have chosen this option for financial security. This excerpt from the previous study (Fallon, 2013) described how her body reacted negatively to the possibility of returning to catering during her NLP session:

Once she had tuned into her body, she felt “it was like my body would drop, I would actually feel a heaviness coming on me” whenever she spoke of returning to her previous occupation.

Catherine referred to this again in her follow-up interview in this current study, summarising how the NLP practitioner had told her to “keep away from it, not for you, you’ve been there and done that, you’re worn out”. She now believes this “was the best decision I had ever made” as she explains:

That is one bit of advice he did give me and I walked away and thought, he is damn right, the only reason I would have taken it was for the money and then I sat and I thought about it and no amount of money was going to make up for this.....[Catherine]

Catherine has learned a “completely different way of dealing with” things and is no longer “afraid to say no”. Having always felt the need to please everyone else, Catherine is now resolute that this behavioural change is an outcome of engaging in NLP. NLP “stopped me from looking for something and just pulling back and appreciate what I have right now”. She is mindful and happier in herself and “I have accepted where I am, I have accepted who I am” which she summarised as contentment. Happy working in an office environment, Catherine is exploring all her options for the future with aspirations to continue with her education, perhaps part-time and may consider full-time employment if the opportunity arises. Optimistically looking forward to the future, Catherine found returning to adult education an enriching experience to make her “stronger”, “more confident”, “easier and more content”. Additionally, she feels her engagement in NLP:

triggered something that finished it off.....that gave me a sense of.....I don't need to be something for somebody else but be what I am and what I want to be...[Catherine]

The researcher noted a real change in Breda from the previous two interviews in the original study when she had been quiet and at times cautious about imparting information. She was much more open for the interview in the current study and spoke a lot on how family dynamics had affected her deeply. She feels her engagement with NLP “helped me enormously” and states “I have the strength for it now”. Breda says she dealt with a lot of “baggage” that day and it has left her feeling easier and in “control”. This emanated from Breda; cheerful and relaxed, she reflected on her experience of adult education including the barriers for adult learners:

We all brought stuff in with us that you know like, we were only ever to stay on this rung of the ladder, that we were never to go above ourselves, you know, that we didn't have what it took to do that.....[Breda]

Breda feels “empowered” and is not “afraid of conflict”, describing NLP as a “reassurance to me”. Whilst she deferred a 3<sup>rd</sup> level CAO offer last year she plans to pursue this in September 2014 and is looking forward to this new phase in her life. She has also enrolled in an online psychology course to explore this area of interest and for now is really enjoying living in the moment.

Niall is looking forward to September with anticipation as he has applied for a college place through the CAO to pursue social studies. He is happy that he decided to prepare for this by changing to social studies mid-way through his FETAC course explaining “it felt right but I think I needed the reassurance from (name of guidance counsellor) to make the change”. He feels he benefitted greatly from career guidance as part of the curriculum and having the opportunity to meet with the guidance counsellor for a one to one guidance session. He recalls the “bad experiences” of interviews in the past and explains how “that was a real issue for me, confidence in front of others”. Niall feels he has made real improvement which he attributes to rethinking his approach to the interview. The guidance counsellor taught him to put himself in the employers’ shoes. This, together with delivering class presentations has changed his experience of speaking in front of others from “nerve wrecking” to “absolutely delighted” and “looking forward to it”. Niall could not think of anything negative about returning to education and related that the guidance counsellor instilled a lot of confidence in him:

I think it was just how firm she was, basically, there was no messing, if I was sure this was the route for me, then there was not reason that I shouldn’t follow it.....[Niall]

At the time of the research interview, James had fulfilled his recent ambition to progress to third level and is looking forward to pursuing his studies and embracing the challenge of developing his education to complete his degree. He has not accessed third level guidance since starting on his new education route but is very aware that the service is available if needed. The small class numbers and “approachable” lecturers facilitate a good support system at present. James is assured of his commitment to finishing the course and graduating with a level 8 honours degree and is already talking about the world of work, a “good job, web design, software development”. He believes that the guidance he received whilst in VTOS has a “very big influence on the way I feel at the moment”. James realises he has personal difficulties but feels he can look at the bigger picture and use what he is doing now to positive effect for his future.

#### **4.5 Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the data analysis strategy and present the findings of the research through two main themes and a number of the sub-themes. The

findings reveal the transformative nature of returning to education and the benefits of receiving a form of guidance intervention for all of the participants. Niall and James have experienced adult education as a positive transitioning process out of their working life in the construction industry. Adult guidance was pivotal to helping them overcome obstacles and increasing their confidence and self-esteem to realise their inner resources to pursue careers in the social studies field and in the ICT industry. This was similar to the experiences of the two female participants' with regards to building their confidence to a level whereby they no longer feel inadequate and are happy in the knowledge that they have the ability to reach their full potential.

All four participants made reference to the importance of being listened to during their helping interventions. A sense of empowerment was evident for all participants as they narrated their story; both NLP participants commented on being empowered (Breda), while Catherine spoke of it in terms taking control in decision making and she has learned to say *no*. Catherine and Breda experienced similar outcomes whereby they both dealt with a recurring struggle during their NLP session. Although mutually deep and personal, the concerns were individual to each participant; they both report it has not come back to haunt either of them since. Catherine and Breda have derived benefit and enjoyment from their return to adult learning which has formed the building blocks for the future. Through NLP, they have increased awareness of all the positive aspects in their lives. The main difference between the two interventions is that NLP expediently dealt with personal issues which were impinging on Catherine and Breda's happiness.

A synthesis of the research findings and the secondary data from the literature review will be discussed in Chapter 5.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a critical analysis of the primary research findings within the context of secondary findings detailed in the literature review and with reference to the original study which explored the efficacy of NLP as a helping technique (Fallon, 2013). An overview of the research findings together with the experience of returning to adult education will be considered. The chapter will also compare and discuss outcomes as a result of engaging in the helping interventions.

### **5.1 Overview of the Research Findings**

The principal objective of this current study was to compare outcomes following NLP interventions and the conventional forms of guidance interventions in adult guidance counselling as a follow-on from the previous study (Fallon, 2013). The main finding in the previous study (Fallon, 2013) identified how NLP could effectively augment conventional guidance counselling using a directive approach in questioning skills, a distinctive NLP technique. Skilled questioning assists the client to focus in a discerning way, to discover the blind spots and help inspire new ideas or future plans (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000). The earlier study highlighted the expedient way in which NLP dealt with long-standing issues and barriers bringing clarity to the participant's situations (Fallon, 2013). To compare outcomes between the two interventions, the primary research question in this current study asked:

*How effective are the helping interventions of NLP and conventional guidance for clients of an adult guidance service?*

In order to address the primary research question, a number of secondary questions were identified which considered the changes that have taken place for the participants in terms of thoughts and beliefs since engagement in a helping intervention process; how the participants feel after the lapse of time and any tangible benefits derived therein. The research findings capture the fervour of the participants and records the respective impressions of their helping intervention.

Overall, the findings in this study identify positive outcomes for the participants and returning to education has been a turning point in their lives. Helping interventions are fundamental to supporting people when preparing for future employment to build resilience, increase personal agency and promote career adaptability (Biesta et al, 2011; Bimrose and Hearne, 2012; NESC, 2013; Savickas, 2008). It was arduous to find implicit comparisons between the two interventions with *soft outcomes* a significant outcome for all of the participants. Hearne (2012) confirms the difficulty in measuring soft outcomes as was found in this study when deciphering a comparison of the outcomes from the two different interventions. All of the participants experienced increased self-esteem, confidence; the ability to make decisions and to cope with uncertainty. However, outcomes as a result of engaging in NLP appeared to be on a deeper, more personal level for the two participants involved and some differences could be identified in the strategies used. A study by Verbruggen and Sels (2008) found career self-directedness to be improved through guidance as helping interventions foster self-awareness and adaptability. This happens through building self-esteem and training participation with an overall finding to indicate that guidance promotes self-responsibility, a concept that is much talked about in policy and literature on new ways of working with clients (ibid).

Despite having worked all of their lives, the findings indicate that unemployment was the predominant reason for the four participants to return to education through VTOS as it is one of the specific supports to target the unemployed. Within a ten year period, the Irish economy has experienced the highs of the boom to the depressions of the downturn resulting in mass unemployment, banking and public debt crises with diminished opportunities (Behan, 2014). In the current study, both Niall and James were directly affected by the crash in the construction industry and had no other experience of employment. Unemployment doubled for construction industry workers during the period 2006-2011 leading to long-term unemployment as was the case for Niall and James until they transitioned to education in 2011 (Kelly and McGuinness, 2013). Unemployment can have a very negative impact on confidence, self-esteem and well-being with men finding it particularly hard (Waters and Moore, 2002). Catherine had worked in hospitality and catering, she also had the experience of successfully running her own business for a number of years. However, the hospitality sector was not insulated from the recession and Catherine became unemployed in early 2010. Breda decided to 'off-ramp' following the birth of her daughter (ten years old), however, she felt she needed to both reskill and build

her confidence and self-esteem to facilitate her return to the workforce (Sharf, 2010). An established education structure is encouraging an ever-increasing number of adult learners to upskill or realise ambitions to pursue higher education (Behan et al., 2013). This is hugely instrumental in equipping people to move from unemployment to education and education to work (ibid).

The first section 5.2 will provide a backdrop to how the participants came to engage in adult education and subsequently, the adult guidance service. Section 5.3 describes the helping interventions process while section 5.4 deals with outcomes as a result of engaging in interventions. A comparison of the interventions will be discussed throughout.

## **5.2 Returning to Education and Helping Interventions**

The participants of this study were able to access helping interventions when they returned to education through VTOS. For this reason, outcomes realised through the adult education experience will be deliberated as the positivity of the experience is interlinked with the encouraging outcomes following both an NLP intervention and a conventional guidance intervention. Adults in transition; recently unemployed, new to education or about to re-enter employment often have a bank of transferable skills of which they are unaware (Bobek, 2013). Working with adults to assess their skills and competencies will help identify strengths and limitations to inform the skill building required increasing employability; this is what adult education and guidance seeks to achieve (ibid.). MacRuairc (2009) believes educational disadvantage widens the marginalisation gap and despite significant policy measures and initiatives to address this, inequalities remain considerable in certain socio-economic groups. This corroborates with James' account of his school days in England whereby "if you were richer class, you got looked after better in school and if you were lower class, you didn't get looked after in school". Subsequently, he left school early in his teenage years believing he was uneducated. Hence returning to education as an adult was akin to a first-time learning experience.

Ultimately, the findings indicate that returning to education was a positive learning experience for the four participants, not only in terms of increasing their educational attainment. All of them spoke of their personal growth and development and as adults, this was deep and meaningful for them (Waters and Moore, 2002). According to Niall, it is

“pride in yourself”, he likes to do things well and feels he has achieved this through learning and education. Even though Waters and Moore (2002) argue that unemployed women benefit more from social support, all four participants felt the support of their peers was very important to them and they have developed lasting friendships within their group. Social support contributes greatly to coping with unemployment in helping to reduce the effects of isolation and promoting an optimistic outlook (Linn et al., 1985; Slebarska et al., 2009). Catherine commented on the initial feelings of loneliness upon completing her course in VTOS. Niall had felt very isolated when he was unemployed but this has all changed due to his return to education. Breda and James spoke about everyone helping each other in the group when they encountered a problem in course work; they got a *kick* out of working it out rather than approach the tutor for help. Catherine described how she never believed in herself as she was not educated. Returning to education has been a revelation for her and she feels fulfilled by the experience. Memories of school are not happy ones for Breda but she has learned to reconcile this with herself. Bobek (2013, p.661) states that stay at home mums “may not see how their numerous responsibilities and skills generalize to job requirements in the workplace”. Breda attributes regaining her confidence to her educational experience with a renewed self-assurance in her abilities.

In recent years, the number of people returning to education as a means of improving their life chances has increased considerably. Almost three thousand people returned to further education in 2012 in the region where this study took place (Burke et al., 2013). In excess of 42,000 people nationally were awarded Level 5 and 6 FETAC awards in 2012 (Behan et al., 2013). This is very encouraging for the efficacy of further education, although Lunn (2013) believes support for positive outcomes in practice depends greatly on the extent it can serve to influence policy makers. James related how he was described by the guidance counsellor as “a typical example of how you can bring someone in with no education and go forward”. He is very proud of his achievements and the journey he has travelled.

Nonetheless, Field (2011) espouses the positive effects of education for adult learners but recognises that it is difficult for policy makers to quantify the outcomes, hence diminishing its value to policy makers who are required to make comparisons based on quantifiable data. Furthermore, “adult education is all too easily overlooked by many public agencies whose remit is not directly educational” (Field, 2011, p.13). Drudy (2009) is critical of policy makers who were pushing for the ‘knowledge economy’, hindsight indicates a lack-

lustre approach to realising this. Post 2008, this was off the political agenda with budget cutbacks having serious implications for education provision and moratoriums on recruitment affecting most services (ibid.). Field (2011, p.16) states that while adult learning enhances the basic skills set, evidence has suggested that it “can sometimes deliver greater benefits to women, and delivers them faster than to men”. While this could not be substantiated in the findings of this study, both female participants had progressed through VTOS in a two year period achieving a FETAC Level 6 award while the two male participants took the two years to complete their FETAC Level 5 award. The participants’ experience of helping interventions will be discussed in the following section.

### **5.3 The Process Element of Helping Interventions**

The findings in the literature review endorsed both new ways of working with clients and adept use of strategies to suit both the client and the situation (Bimrose et al., 2008; Egan, 2007; Kidd, 2006; Savickas, 2011). Pelz and Hall (2007) describe NLP strategies as working to form the story through question and challenge with space to identify the issues and problems but in a way that is moving towards possibilities and solutions for the future. Fallon (2013) identified these strategies to be somewhat similar to Egan’s (2007) humanistic approach which provides a framework to direct the process and the model promotes a collaborate alliance between both parties. It is within the confines of its purpose that the learner will systematically “struggle to manage problems and develop opportunities” through “positive psychology” (ibid., p.18,34). Catherine and Breda commented in all of the research interviews on how much they were involved in the NLP process and they believed it improbable to take a passive role. Niall and James initiated one to one contact with the guidance counsellor and they were committed to follow through on the next steps. However, they did not talk about their intervention in the same way as Catherine and Breda. Bandler (2008) explains it is a very quick process to acquire a problem and he believes it should be equally as quick to dispel the problem. However, the difficulty is whereby people learn to have the problem (ibid.). NLP works quickly as it is not concentrating on how the problem was acquired, rather a concentration on getting the person to stop it and demanding active involvement in the process. All three participants from the previous study (Fallon, 2013) commented on the intensity of the process and feeling fatigued in the hours after the intervention.

Dilts and DeLozier (2000) explain how we form mental images of our world, of how we want things to be, however, if this is limited or barriers exist, progression is hindered. NLP uses visualisation techniques to form a very particular image to expand our map of the world and create new possibilities (ibid). The effectiveness of this strategy was evidenced when the guidance counsellor in the earlier study (Fallon, 2013) realised it was within her control to introduce change to enhance the guidance service. The NLP process allowed her to visualise a picture of what she wanted the guidance service to look like. Similarly, Catherine appreciated for the first time that she could meet her own needs first when making decisions through building a picture of how this could be for her (Fallon, 2013). Constructivist solution-based counselling uses this technique in a similar way as the client and guidance counsellor construct a vision for the client's preferred future (Miller, 2006). Egan (2007) speaks about the "decision-making trap" which happens when people decide on the steps to be taken before visualising the preferred outcome. Niall referred to his own experience of this in conventional guidance when the guidance counsellor asked him where he saw himself in five years. Niall had to picture his future, decide how he wanted it to be and plan the steps he had to take to get there. It helped him to break down the process in a comparable way to strategies used in NLP.

Questioning is a powerful strategy used in NLP and all three participants from the previous study (Fallon, 2013) remarked on the power of the tactical questions used which challenged them to think through issues leading to a clear conclusion. Presuppositions are "unconscious beliefs or assumptions" detected in the language used by clients and NLP questioning uses challenge to explore "how, specifically, do you know that?" (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000, p.997). It was an unburdening process for the participants to answer questions such as 'why do you say that?', 'how do you know that?', 'who else?', 'what else?' (ibid.). While questioning is no doubt a strategy employed in conventional guidance counselling also, it is more typical for a client to be asked to "describe" within "the client's meaning" rather than to "explain" and "justify their thoughts, feelings and actions" (Reid, 2006, p.34). Consequently, NLP uses a more directive approach when using questioning techniques and this afforded one client, Breda, the opportunity to deal with long-standing personal issues during her NLP session.

"A core condition of the constructivist approaches includes listening to the client's story" (Reid, 2006, p.31). Listening is one of the core conditions of person-centred counselling

and the genuineness of the guidance counsellor is evidenced through attending to the client, “a willingness to be there in the moment” and linking what has been said when summarising back to the client (McLeod, 2011, p.50-51). According to Dilts and DeLozier (2000), the NLP Practitioner is listening to the structure of the language through the use of grammar and syntax as opposed to the content of words and vocabulary which is also essential in narrative counselling. All four participants noted on being listened to during their exclusive helping intervention. James described his experience with the guidance counsellor as follows:

you can talk to her and then she'll stop you and then she'll say something and then you talk again and then she'll stop you so you know she's listening to every single thing you say, and she's giving, not solutions but she's saying things as you go along that maybe you feel differently

(James)

Savickas (2011a, p.40) believes good listening skills leads to appropriate questioning thus facilitating the client to narrate an inclusive story, the more they “tell their life story, the more real it becomes, and consequently the more real they become”. The participants who engaged in NLP commented on the benefits of being listened to as “fantastic, absolutely, it was like ears and eyes, it was excellent, totally listened to” (guidance counsellor) and “I felt, definitely I felt I was listened to that day” (Breda) (Fallon, 2013). Both Breda and Catherine spoke of their interest in engaging in further NLP sessions as they feel they would benefit from learning more about themselves. Catherine said to learn two more things about herself would mean so much to her.

#### **5.4 Outcomes from Engaging in NLP and Conventional Guidance Counselling**

People need guidance and support to flourish, now more than ever (Sultana, 2012). Guidance counselling interventions help to increase buoyancy in the client by dealing sensitively with softer issues such as self-efficacy and self-belief during the guidance encounter (Hearne, 2009). Doing so can reduce many of the barriers to learning, education and progression to work (ibid.). This study highlighted that all four participants had an idea of their *best self* (Gaffney, 2011). Their accounts of learning, growth and development were inspirational and they have all initiated constructive change in their lives as a result. In the earlier study, Catherine and Breda engaged in individual sessions with a qualified NLP practitioner and they have acquired a different way of thinking since

the NLP process. The review of NLP in the previous study (Fallon, 2013), recognised aspects of person-centred counselling in NLP through extending choices and resolving problems in a solution focused manner. NLP was found to be a strategic way of working as client's narrative is not the focus, rather a concentration on reconfiguring how the client comprehends their map of the world (ibid.). For example, Catherine no longer engages in the negative self-thought that had diminished her confidence and self-esteem. She is assured that NLP contributed to this change. According to Tosey and Mathison (2010, p.318), NLP promotes "self-determination through overcoming learnt self-limitation". From Breda's perspective, she uses a specific NLP technique introduced her and finds it really helps her to control how she responds to issues that affect her. Despite Craft's (2001, p.125) scepticism of the non-theoretical foundations of NLP, he does consider it as "a set of strategies" to effect change. Both Catherine and Breda believe they have effected positive change through the use of NLP techniques or strategies. Novick (2010, p.261) considers them to be powerful tools for children and he believes children who have been taught a repertoire of strategies grow up with the ability of always being able to think of a plan. Strategies assist in building "emotional muscle" and "the capacity to recover" from upsets (ibid., p.264). Sugarman (2001) asserts that once a set of strategies has been developed, they are flexibly utilized to respond to the situation.

At various junctures, guidance counselling is fundamental to foster the individuals' progress. Therefore, it is crucial that people have the self-awareness to know when they need support and where to access it (Hearne, 2007). Niall and James were afforded the opportunity to seek conventional guidance support in VTOS. Verbruggen and Sels (2008) argue counselling positively impacts and sustains career self-directedness and attributes this to an increase in self-awareness brought about in the counselling process. Niall and James recounted similarities in their experience of guidance as part of the adult education curriculum. They both felt it enabled them to follow a clear path and they believe the guidance counsellor provided them with good advice, suggestions and sometimes solutions to problems they encountered. Both men grew in confidence with increased self-esteem and positivity realising their untapped abilities through returning to education and their experience of guidance. Guidance services have huge capacity to support adults during transition realising positive outcomes for both the individual and the employment market (Browne and Bimrose, 2012). Niall ascribes his conviction in the "pathway that you follow for a number of years" to his guidance counselling experience and he emitted a real



certainty about the future all through the research interview. Barnes et al. (2011) stress the importance for individuals to realise and develop the ability to negotiate varying career directions throughout the lifespan amid global economic challenges.

Breda summarised her NLP intervention in terms of the process of change which has come about for her as “it brought out of me a lot of what I used to carry around with me”. Through NLP she was afforded the opportunity to let it go and she found this “immensely good”. Generalizations, deletions and distortions are the NLP modelling processes used to filter information. However, in the extreme, a singular negative experience generalised over the lifespan can be very damaging as was the case for Catherine and Breda. The NLP Practitioner used the Meta-Model to work with Catherine and Breda to identify patterns in speech and fill gaps in their experience which may have been over-generalised, distorted or deleted leading to impoverished thinking and the cause of distress (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000). In fact, Breda was able to reconcile a life-long issue during her NLP session to the extent that she no longer thinks about it “it’s gone...done and dusted”. This was something that had troubled her deeply and now “it doesn’t register with me anymore”. Grinder and Bandler (1976) state NLP does not manipulate the content of the experience, rather it works on the persons internal representation of the experience. Using the analogy of a cake recipe, altering the order of the ingredients will produce a change in the end product (ibid.).

While Niall and James received one conventional guidance counselling session each, they both availed of the opportunity to speak with the guidance counsellor during their group career guidance classes. They found it reassuring to know there was someone they could approach when they were worried or anxious as the educational environment was a new experience for them as adults. Kidd (2006, p.48) claims resilience is required “to cope with the ups and downs of working life” and this can be bolstered through building confidence, self-efficacy, hope, flexibility and self-reliance”. James made an appointment to see the guidance counsellor as personal matters were impacting on his well-being. He was aware that the guidance counsellor could not fix his financial difficulties. However, talking it through really helped him to contextualise his problems and he has a new found appreciation of all the positives in his life. While the recession will end, Stebleton (2010, p.67) believes the “recovery will take a longer time, perhaps years, to fully rebound”. The way in which a client adapts to their particular situation as a result of the recession is

vitaly important (Sharf, 2010). Bobek (2013) espouses the need for career adaptability to ease decision making and make choices as the person's situation changes. Niall met individually with the guidance counsellor seeking advice on the suitability of second year subjects for him and how to pursue his desire to work in the social care field. Niall gained much from his guidance session and was empowered by the faith the guidance counsellor had in him. He has taken this approach on board "if you really want to do something, well then do it" and this has increased his optimism for the future. Having thoroughly researched the third level course for which he has applied, he knows it will require hard work and commitment but feels he has the potential to realise his ambitions.

For years, Catherine had believed that she was somehow "not good enough". Following engagement in NLP and subsequently three interviews later (two interviews from previous study and third interview for this research), her outlook has remained positively changed especially in relation to her self-esteem. She has stopped looking back, she is content in the now and ready to embrace the future. She describes her experience:

He triggered, oh absolutely, I can still remember the day, I was on a high.....I was on a high and I have incorporated it and I thought it was worth an awful lot to me since that day and I would definitely put it down to.....whether it was the education over the two years that made me more confident, I don't know but I think he triggered something that finished it off.....that gave me a sense of.....I don't need to be something else for somebody else but be what I am and what I want to be.....

(Catherine)

Dilts and DeLozier (2000, p. 1187) explain self-esteem issues stem from "limiting beliefs and negative imprints" arising from past experiences and NLP uses strategies to eradicate these "thought viruses". Similar to Catherine, James' confidence and self-esteem blossomed during his time in VTOS resulting in positive aspirations for his future. Niall noted an increase in his own confidence, self-esteem and personal agency. He remarked throughout the research interview how the guidance counsellor instilled a *can do* attitude in him. The AEGI guidance counsellor mainly uses a person-centred, narrative approach to guidance but had hoped to integrate a more directive approach (Fallon, 2013).

The role of narrative is significant in guidance counselling as the client is enabled to leave behind the oppressions of the past and bring what is good into the future (McMahon and Patton, 2006). Through listening to the story and the use of language, the guidance counsellor determines the positive and negative aspects to work on together with the most

effective coping strategies for the particular client (ibid.). James credits his guidance experience with helping him to negotiate barriers and “that little bit of a boost to expect more of yourself”. McLeod (2011, p.64) explains that the counsellor makes “use of a range of core skills” adjusted to suit the clients’ needs, attending to higher level skills of empathy and insight to open up the bigger picture for the client. Both Niall and James stated that they have not needed to access the guidance service in their new respective education settings (Further Education College and third level institution). According to Holaday and McPhearson (1997), promoting ways for the client to access their inner strengths encourages resilience. Niall completed his CAO application independently and related that he has no problem completing his personal statement as part of the application. He felt well able to express himself, felt good talking about his experiences and acknowledged that this may not have been the case previously. James is happy to know that there is a guidance service in the college but he has not had any reason to make an appointment yet. In order to manage transitions and cope with uncertainty, a clients’ resiliency is vitally important (Bimrose and Hearne, 2012). He too feels he has the inner resources to figure things out crediting the “experience and support” of guidance and VTOS.

## **5.5 Summary and Conclusion**

Engaging in a helping intervention was an affirmative experience in the lives of all the participants in both studies. Niall and James are positively moving forward in their studies, they have a strong support network and definite plans for the future. They both contributed in a full and meaningful way in the research interview. Catherine and Breda shared their experience on a deeper level. To facilitate the researcher to compare the outcomes from engagement in both NLP and conventional guidance interventions, the research transcripts were reviewed again to gain a sense of the participants’ experiences. The researcher felt both Catherine and Breda were engaged at a deeper level during their NLP intervention process (Fallon, 2013). To substantiate this opinion, the recordings from the most recent interview were listened to again to capture the emotion of the participants. It could be argued that the guidance counsellor is directly associated with the educational experience while on the other hand, the NLP practitioner was not involved in Catherine and Breda’s educational experience per se. Therefore, they may have engaged on a more personal level during their NLP session thus enabling them to relate a deeper account of

their experience. Nevertheless, NLP is based on the premise that by using appropriate techniques, a positive outcome should be achieved. Bandler (2008) supposes we have the ability to reprogramme our behaviour therefore if we really want change, then it is our responsibility to do so. Breda finished up her interview by saying she had become “conditioned” which caused her to lose her unique identity but now she is “beginning to feel more like me”. Catherine and Breda felt that if their peers could experience what they experienced it would be most helpful. Themes of empowerment, confidence and self-esteem, active coping, building inner resources and being listened to were evidential outcomes from engaging in both helping interventions. While the process and outcomes of the interventions were quite similar at times, contrast was apparent. The findings revealed the two sets of participants had very different understandings of their engagement in the intervention. The personal learning for the NLP participants was immeasurable. This chapter illuminated the unique experience of two types of interventions for clients of an AEGI and affirmed the importance of supporting learners who return to education in their hopes to realise a more positive future. The next chapter will conclude the thesis with an appraisal of the research study together with a number of recommendations.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.0 Introduction**

This final chapter presents the conclusion to this research study. It provides a summary of the findings within the context of the aims and objectives of the study. The strengths and limitations of the research are discussed together with recommendations for policy, practice and future research.

### **6.1 Overview of Findings in the context of Study Aims and Objectives**

The overall aim of this study was to compare outcomes for clients after NLP interventions and conventional forms of guidance interventions in adult guidance counselling practice. The study was an expansion of previous research (Fallon, 2013) conducted in the same AEGI Service which explored the usefulness of NLP in adult guidance. The specific objectives identified were to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of the interventions in terms of the benefits from engaging in a helping intervention, the clients' outlook for the future and the endurance of the outcomes over time. The findings from the study indicate a very positive experience for all of the participants who returned to adult education as a result of unemployment. Initial feelings of apprehension, uncertainty and lack of self-belief were recalled when speaking about the first step towards education. Bandura (1995, p.5) recognised how difficult it can be "to achieve much while fighting self-doubt" as self-efficacy is required to realise positive outcomes. For the participants, these feelings were dispelled early on in their educational experience when they realised it was a very different environment from their personal experiences in primary and secondary school. Their confidence increased and they began to believe in themselves and their capabilities, they were able to dispense with negative self-thoughts of being no good at school, and work towards fulfilling ambitions for the future. Brown et al. (2004, p.20) suggest that self-esteem and contentment are largely dependent on "social status, associated with occupational attainment". The four participants in this study were actively engaged in realising their ambitions towards a more fulfilling life.

There were no clearly defined differences in the outcomes experienced by the participants from engaging in the two different intervention types. The researcher found that the NLP participants engaged on a personal level during their NLP intervention, hence resulting in outcomes of a more personal nature. They were both able to reconcile angst from the past and learn new ways of dealing with issues. While the participants from conventional guidance engaged from an educational guidance dimension, the outcomes positively impacted on their personal lives. For example, James met with the guidance counsellor regarding a private issue. He knew there were no solutions but the one to one session helped him to contextualise his financial problems amid the hugely positive aspects of his life. He felt a lot better for this. He still has the financial pressures but his determination and positivity is getting him through. Hearne (2005, p.21) describes the benefits of educational guidance as “personal development, educational progression and enhanced career progression”. Guidance interventions provide clients with valuable self-insight, increased confidence and the space to reflect (Bimrose, 2006). The experiences of the participants in this study were mirrored by a longitudinal study by Bimrose et al. (2008) whereby guidance motivated clients to explore options for the future together with an increase in confidence and self-awareness.

## **6.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Research Study**

### **6.2.1 Strengths**

As over a half year had passed between the interview process and engagement in the helping interventions, the participants were afforded the lapse of time to consider fully the efficacy of the intervention for them. It was particularly important for the researcher to capture the unique meanings and outcomes for each participant; this is the strength of the interpretivist paradigm. “To understand the subjective world of human experience” was the hinge-pin to this research (Cohen et al, 2007, p.21). The face to face interviews enabled direct observations, the opportunity to seek clarity and enter the subjective world of the participants in space of the interview.

It was important to get a gender balance to contribute to quality research with equal consideration of the life patterns, biological differences and the needs of both men and women.

Two of the participants interviewed were involved in the original study (Fallon, 2013) in terms of engaging in the NLP intervention process and partaking in two follow-up interviews. Their voluntariness to continue on to be part of this extended study was a key strength given the dearth of research in NLP (Fallon, 2013; Tosey and Mathison 2010).

The two participants interviewed on outcomes following engagement in conventional guidance counselling had been learners of the VTOS centre. This was a comfortable environment for them and they were familiar with the researcher who completed her course placement there. These factors eased the participants into a stress-free interview process.

### **6.2.2 Limitations**

The two NLP participants volunteered to engage in an NLP intervention while the other two participants sought one to one appointments with the guidance counsellor of their own volition. While advantageous for this study, it may be considered a limitation whereby the research does not consider the effectiveness of the interventions when working with repressed clients who may not engage to the extent of the clients in this study. According to Schlossberg et al. (1995) change takes place when it is experienced by the individual, if change occurs and it is not felt, then it is not a transition. The participants in this study were positively engaged in effecting change in their lives.

The qualitative nature of the research makes it difficult to generalise outside of this case study (Thomas, 2009). A further limitation is the small sample size of four participants, nevertheless, it is probable, however, that guidance counsellors may reflect on the outcomes in relation to their own practices.

### **6.3 Implications at a Policy, Practical and Research Level**

There are a number of implications arising from this overall research study. Shortcomings were identified in the literature pertaining to the framework used to track the impact of guidance on the progression routes for clients (Hearne, 2005). Client feedback from studies such as this, illuminate the very real soft and tangible outcomes resultant from engagement in guidance and helping interventions. It is imperative that policy

acknowledges and supports the outcomes from guidance and give credence to the voice of the client (Hearne, 2009). From the researchers experience in adult guidance practice, this is a work in progress which is actively being addressed by the NCGE (ibid.). The NCGE are currently implementing a case study facility on the Adult Guidance Management System (AGMS). This addition to the AGMS to effectively portray the full extent of the work being done on the ground has the potential to further inform policy, practice and research. Field (2011) states the increasing importance for “adult educators to articulate more clearly their understanding of the benefits and outcomes of adult learning”. The goals of learning, labour and social equity are interconnected with lifelong learning and lifelong guidance policies to sustain employability (ibid). While this is a focus in the economic downturn, *employment outcomes* are taking precedence (Field, 2011; Hearne, 2009).

Matching *people to jobs* is an out-dated concept and guidance can no longer promise certainty (Bimrose et al, 2008). The examination of outcomes in this study in terms of intervention processes is inspiring and demonstrates the efficacy of helping the client to remain positive in uncertainty. This is the essence of soft outcomes; empowerment, confidence and self-esteem, active coping, building inner resources and a sense of being listened to. It is essential for guidance practitioners to look at expedient ways to work within tight budgets, time constraints and inadequate staffing resources.

Disparity is evident in the AEGI Service in this study with one guidance counsellor and no Information Officer. The geographical area is large, extensively rural and the guidance counsellor has to extend the service over a number of towns in the county. The guidance counsellor also partook in the previous research and had planned to train as a certified NLP Practitioner. To date, she has not had the time to dedicate to further training. In reality, the service does not have the resources to facilitate all those who need it. However, if the guidance counsellor continues to deliver a quality service, working on best practice initiatives with enduring outcomes for clients, justification for supporting and developing the service through additional resources will feed into both policy and research. Support for guidance is evident throughout the literature and it is part of the agenda for reform (NESC, 2013), however, it can take some time working on the ground through initiatives to support change before it influences policy at any level. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.46), “a piece of research does not feed simplistically or directly into a specific piece of



policy-making”. For this reason, it is important that we as practitioners nurture what we know is working, and in time the positive results will emanate from a *bottom-up* perspective (Hearne, 2009).

## **6.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations with regard to practice, policy and research can be made. Positive outcomes and a plan for the future can help people deal with transitions and negotiate adversity. The guidance counsellor has to adapt to the client’s needs by using strategic approaches to deal with unpredictable issues and circumstances to foster human development (Kidd, 2006; Savickas, 2008;2011a). The recommendations are as follows:

1. For due consideration to be given to new and expedient ways of helping adult clients. It can be difficult to instil optimism and encourage clients who have been long-term unemployed or who have experienced negativity in education. This study has highlighted the effectiveness of NLP to facilitate positive change for the participants involved.
2. For practitioners who work within the staged model of helping, eclecticism and new ways of helping should be explored to develop and enhance their skills to use self-efficacy building interventions with clients negotiating transition.
3. To provide practitioners with the opportunity to gain exposure on new ways of working with clients. Perhaps this could be facilitated through CPD or as a consideration for workshops at the IGC Annual Conference.
4. It is always to be recommended to look at what other countries are doing to inform best practice. Practitioners in New Zealand use NLP strategies as part of their client interventions and the University of Derby Corporate provide a MA in Applied Coaching with NLP training as part of the curriculum.
5. To promote support networks for adult learners. The provision of occasional workshops to cover topics such as (i) interview skills (ii) creating CVs (iii) job search resources (iv) building self-esteem (v) returning to education, the list is endless. This could have a dual effect; introduce people to guidance who have not come through education pathways and provide network opportunities for people who feel isolated and marginalised.

6. For the Government to review the 2012 budget cuts and give consideration to adequately staffing poorly resourced AEGI services.
7. A longitudinal study is recommended to facilitate a richer comparison of outcomes using both types of interventions.

## **6.5 Reflexivity**

This extended research study has provided me with considerable insight on the meaningful outcomes of helping interventions for clients. According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.171), researchers should seek “to understand their part in, or influence on” research; I was mindful at all times to uphold a self-reflexive approach throughout the study. As researcher, I felt very privileged that the participants gave of their time to be interviewed on their experiences. It was not only this; they were sharing information on their personal journey thus far. The outcomes were under the spotlight, to compare the aftereffects of engagement in two different interventions. From the naked eye, all of the participants were in a good place, enjoying the moment and with a plan for the future. Full and meaningful participation contributed greatly to the study and I was enlightened on the valuable contribution guidance makes for people dealing with transitions in their lives.

The two male participants who had engaged in conventional guidance were enthusiastic in the interview and happy to answer my questions. I felt it helped them to talk through the distance they have travelled and reflect on their achievements. I now take time in my own work to follow-up with clients, be it a quick email or something in the post of interest to them. It is the small things to let the client know that you care. James commented on this much throughout his interview. The AEGI Service in which I work also tracks client progression after six months. For me, this is no longer about ticking the boxes on the AGMS. I feel the research has increased my awareness to explore the client’s journey, listen to the language used, know where they are in terms of being in a *good place* or in need of support. It may also be necessary to assess the need for follow-up guidance or referral.

I was struck by the sense of enthusiasm of the two participants from the previous study on NLP interventions. They were very open and sharing on a deep personal level. I could sense that it meant a lot to them to have engaged in NLP. I was gratified that they benefitted through my research study. Real healing can happen in the space given to clients and I hope to remember this in my own busy day. I have become aware of my personal growth and have learned to be there in the moment for the client.

I highly regard ethics in research to safeguard everyone involved and the client in particular. I was careful at all times to protect the identity of the participants, safeguard confidentiality and ensure the interview was not unduly distressing for them. Ethical considerations are a grounding process and therefore, helped me as researcher to work within the boundaries.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter concludes the research study with an overview of the findings in the context of the aims and objectives of the research. The strengths and limitations were addressed together with implications for practice. A number of recommendations have been made in relation to policy, practice and research. The researcher also provides a reflexive analysis of the research process.

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UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**Information Letter (CEO)**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Research Title: **A comparative examination of the efficacy of  
Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional  
interventions as helping techniques in Adult Guidance  
Counselling**

EHSREC No.: **2013\_04\_23\_EHS**

Dear CEO,

I am currently a student on the MA in Guidance Counselling with the Department of Education and Professional Studies, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Dr. Lucy Hearne. As part of my studies I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling.

In my research, I aim to undertake a comparative examination of the efficacy of Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional interventions as helping techniques in the adult guidance process. The findings of this research will provide insight on the efficacy of NLP as a helping technique seven months post intervention and facilitate a comparative study between NLP and conventional guidance interventions.

In order to gather this information I would appreciate if you would agree to me carrying out this additional piece of research in the Adult Education Guidance Service. This would involve randomly selecting two adult participants from the client database of the guidance service. Those recruited must have received a stand-alone guidance intervention in Summer 2013. I am also requesting permission to interview the two adult learners who participated in the previous study (June 2013). The research will involve me carrying out an interview with all four participants to assess outcomes post NLP intervention and



conventional guidance following a time lapse of seven months. The interviews will be tape recorded and last approximately 45 minutes.

The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through professional publications.

If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please contact me or my Supervisor:

Student Name:	Imelda Fallon	Supervisor:	Dr. Lucy Hearne
Email:	11042303@studentmail.ul.ie	Email:	lucy.hearne@ul.ie
		Tel. No.	061 202931

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2013\_04\_23\_EHS). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent source, you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**EHS Faculty Office**  
**University of Limerick**  
**Tel (061) 234101**  
**Email: ehrsresearchethics@ul.ie**



UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**Consent Form (CEO)**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Research Title: **A comparative examination of the efficacy of  
Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional  
interventions as helping techniques in Adult Guidance  
Counselling**

EHSREC No.: **2013\_04\_23\_EHS**

I have read the Information Letter and understand in detail the particulars of the research dissertation. I understand that the identity of the organisation and the participants will not be revealed at any stage in the reporting of the research study. The conditions involved in the research which are designed to protect the privacy of participants and respect their contributions are:

- i. Participation is entirely voluntary.
- ii. Participants are free to withdraw at any time in the process and any contributions made will be subsequently destroyed.
- iii. The research interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the researcher and the supervisor. Excerpts from the interviews may be made part of the final research dissertation, but under no circumstances will names or any identifying characteristics be included.

I hereby give my consent for Imelda Fallon to carry out this research in the Adult Education Guidance Service.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**Volunteer Information Letter (NLP Participants)**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Research Title: **A comparative examination of the efficacy of  
Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional  
interventions as helping techniques in Adult Guidance  
Counselling**

EHSREC No.: **2013\_04\_23\_EHS**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am pursuing my studies on the MA in Guidance Counselling with the Department of Education and Professional Studies, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Dr. Lucy Hearne. As part of my studies I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling.

I aim to undertake a comparative examination of the efficacy of Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional interventions as helping techniques in the adult guidance process. The findings of this research will provide insight on the efficacy of NLP as a helping technique seven months post intervention and facilitate a comparative study between NLP and conventional guidance interventions.

In order to gather this information, I am requesting your participation as the research will involve me carrying out an additional recorded face to face interview with you to assess outcomes since your NLP intervention seven months ago. The interview process is expected to take 45 minutes in duration.

Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through professional publications.

The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick

If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please contact me or my Supervisor:

Student Name: Imelda Fallon  
Email: 11042303@studentmail.ul.ie

Supervisor: Dr. Lucy Hearne  
Email: lucy.hearne@ul.ie  
Tel. No. 061 202931

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2013\_04\_23\_EHS). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent source, you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**EHS Faculty Office**  
**University of Limerick**  
**Tel (061) 234101**  
**Email: ehsrcresearchethics@ul.ie**



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**Volunteer Information Letter (Conventional Guidance Participants)**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Research Title: **A comparative examination of the efficacy of  
Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional  
interventions as helping techniques in Adult Guidance  
Counselling**

EHSREC No.: **2013\_04\_23\_EHS**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently a student on the MA in Guidance Counselling with the Department of Education and Professional Studies, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Dr. Lucy Hearne. As part of my studies I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling.

I aim to undertake a comparative examination of the efficacy of different forms of helping techniques in the adult guidance process. The findings of this research will provide insight on the efficacy of helping techniques seven months post intervention and facilitate a comparative study of guidance interventions.

In order to gather this information, the research will involve me carrying out a recorded face to face interview with you for a duration of 45 minutes on your experience of conventional adult guidance in Summer 2013.

Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through professional publications.

The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick

If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please contact me or my Supervisor:

Student Name: Imelda Fallon  
Email: 11042303@studentmail.ul.ie

Supervisor: Dr. Lucy Hearne  
Email: lucy.hearne@ul.ie  
Tel. No. 061 202931

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2013\_04\_23\_EHS). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent source, you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
**EHS Faculty Office**  
**University of Limerick**  
**Tel (061) 234101**  
**Email: ehsrcresearchethics@ul.ie**



UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**Consent Form (Participants)**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Research Title: **A comparative examination of the efficacy of  
Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional  
interventions as helping techniques in Adult Guidance  
Counselling**

EHSREC No.: **2013\_04\_23\_EHS**

I have read the Information Letter and understand in detail the particulars of the research project. I understand that my identity and that of the educational institution will not be revealed at any stage in the reporting to the research study. The conditions involved in the research which are designed to protect the privacy of participants and respect their contributions are:

- i. Participation is entirely voluntary
- ii. Participants are free to withdraw at any time in the process and any contributions made will be subsequently destroyed.
- iii. The research interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the researcher and the supervisor. Excerpts from the interviews may be made part of the final research dissertation, but under no circumstances will names or any identifying characteristics be included.

I hereby agree to take part in Imelda Fallon's research study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix F  
**NLP PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW**  
**(45 mins. approx.)**



**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**  
**Interview to assess outcomes post NLP intervention**

(based on 'The beginnings of an interview schedule', Thomas 2009, p.165)

Issue	Possible questions	Possible follow up questions	Probes
Outcomes following NLP intervention session after 7 months	Did you notice any changes in your thought process following engagement with NLP?  What has the added benefit been since your NLP session?	How do you feel about that?  Can you describe this?	Really?  Can you tell me more?
Presenting issue e.g. Returning to education, Focussing on further education or new career, Redundancy, Adversity and Challenges	Can we revisit the issues you worked on during the NLP session?  Have you addressed specific issues since?  Describe a situation since whereby you employed an NLP technique?  Did you realise a different outcome when you employed an NLP technique?  Would you now recommend NLP?	How do you feel about that?  And what were you thinking?  What was your reaction?  How would you describe the outcome?  For any particular reason?	Can you tell me more?  Go on.  I'd like to know why?  Is there anything else you'd like to add?  Please tell me more.
To determine the effectiveness of NLP and its place in guidance	Having had time to reflect on your experience of NLP, talk to me about the relevance of NLP to you?  Would you engage in further NLP sessions if the opportunity presented?  Will you continue to use these techniques?	Can it enhance your life?  Overall do you think NLP techniques are helpful for adult learners?  For any particular reason?	I'd like to hear more about that?  Is there anything else you'd like to add?  Is there anything further you would like to contribute to the discussion?



**CONVENTIONAL GUIDANCE INTERVIEW**  
**(45 mins. max.)**



**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Interview to assess outcomes post guidance intervention**

(based on 'The beginnings of an interview schedule', Thomas 2009, p.165)

Issue	Possible questions	Possible follow up questions	Probes
Outcomes following guidance intervention after 7 months	Did you notice any changes in your thought process following your guidance session?  What has the added benefit been since your guidance session?	How do you feel about that?  Can you describe this?	Really?  Can you tell me more?
Presenting issue e.g. Returning to education, Focussing on further education or new career, Redundancy, Adversity and Challenges	Can we revisit the issues you worked on during the guidance session?  Have you addressed specific issues since?  Describe a situation since whereby you feel your guidance session helped you?  Did you realise a different outcome to what you would have had prior to guidance?  Would you recommend guidance counselling?	How do you feel about that?  And what were you thinking?  What was your reaction?  How would you describe the outcome?  For any particular reason?	Can you tell me more?  Go on.  I'd like to know why?  Is there anything else you'd like to add?  Please tell me more.
To determine the effectiveness of guidance interventions	Having had time to reflect on your experience of adult guidance, talk to me about its relevance to you?  Would you engage in further guidance sessions?  Do you think you may access guidance in the future?	Can it add value?  Overall do you think guidance counselling is helpful for adult learners?  For any particular reason?	I'd like to hear more about that?  Is there anything else you'd like to add?  Is there anything further you would like to contribute to the discussion?



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**Explanatory Letter (Non-participating Adult Clients)**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Research Title: **A comparative examination of the efficacy of  
Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and conventional  
interventions as helping techniques in Adult Guidance  
Counselling**

EHSREC No.: **2013\_04\_23\_EHS**

Dear Adult Client,

Thank you for your interest in my research study. As previously explained, it was intended to use a random sample from the guidance service database to select four adult clients. They have been identified and are happy to partake in the research. I would like to acknowledge your contribution in this process and wish you well in your studies.

The Adult Education Guidance Service offers information and support on the educational, vocational, social and personal development of the adult learner. If you wish to avail of one-to-one guidance counselling, you may contact the Adult Guidance Counsellor at (Telephone number) to arrange an appointment.

If you are interested in the outcome of the research, a summary of the findings will be made available to the Adult Education Guidance Service upon completion.

Kind regards

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**IMELDA FALLON**