

# **Career Planning for Children in Conflict with the Law**

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## **Abstract**

Children in conflict with the law (CICL) are those who have committed crimes that need to be investigated and tried in juvenile courts. Despite this, they have the legal right to education and rehabilitation services as stipulated in Republic Act 9344 (Juvenile Justice Welfare Act of 2006) and the Child and Youth Welfare Code of the Philippines. The rehabilitation of youth offenders includes their participation in transition programs. Transition programs and services refer to a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities (Pierangelo 2004). The Philippine Model of Transition by Quijano (2007) envisions full participation, empowerment and productivity of those enrolled in special education programs, the output of which is community involvement through employment. In this model, there is a need for support from professionals and other key people in the community in order for the individual with special needs to attain independent living. For children in youth rehabilitation centers, they are prepared to engage in productive activities after they have served their sentences.

This study focuses on the CICL who are currently serving their sentences while receiving basic education and vocational training in a youth rehabilitation center catering to students from 15 to 21 years old. Utilizing a mixed methods design, quantitative measures on intelligence quotient and career preferences were obtained using the Culture Fair Intelligence Test (CFIT) and the Brainard Occupational Preference Inventory (BOPI), respectively. Qualitative measures utilized were interviews which yielded results in detailing career aspirations, career influences and plans of the subjects after their release.

## Introduction

Crimes committed by children are reported in newspapers, television and the radio. In 2004, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) reported 6,991 children in conflict with the law served in their centers (Cabilao 2004). The United Nations Children's Emergency fund estimates 4,000 children in detention centers in 2005 (Dolan 2005).

Children in conflict with the law (CICL) have violations that range from the petty such as snatching, to more grave offenses like murder. Despite their offenses, they are not treated like adult offenders. The United Nations prohibits incarceration of minors with adults (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006). Furthermore, CICL are entitled to become involved in educational programs to help them reform. The goal of their detention in youth centers is rehabilitative rather than punitive.

Republic Act 9344 (Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006) protects the right of CICL and other children at risk. Children who commit crimes above 15 years old but below 18 years old are exempted from criminal liability but are subjected to intervention programs. Under the law, educational institutions are enjoined to work together with families, community organizations and agencies in the rehabilitation and re-integration of the CICL through individualized educational schemes (Philippine Congress 2006).

The Child and Youth Welfare Code of the Philippines provides for the education of youth offenders in detention homes in order to rehabilitate them. The Code defines youth offenses as those committed by a child, minor or youth, who is over nine but under 18 years old at the time of the commission of the offense (Malacañang Palace 1974).

Transition programs and services are considered as part of the rehabilitation given to CICL. In special education, transition services refer to a coordinated set of

of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities (Pierangelo 2004). The Philippine Model of Transition by Quijano (2007) envisions full participation, empowerment and productivity of those enrolled in special education programs, the output of which is community involvement through employment. In this model, there is a need for support from professionals and other key people in the community in order for the individual with special needs to attain independent living.

Choosing and preparing for a career is an essential part of transition. For children in youth rehabilitation centers, they are prepared to engage in productive activities after they have served their sentences (Luyt and du Preez 2006). Planning for one's career is influenced by several factors. In Holland's Vocational Choice Theory (1997), an individual's personality is the primary factor in vocational choice. Holland (1997) suggests that assessment in vocational interest is critical in predicting individual's success. Thus, in planning careers, interest inventories are taken, which are viewed as personality inventories (Hogan and Blake 2002). Krumboltz (1984) believes that genetic factors such as intelligence and health factors influence career decisions. Other factors including significant life events (Super 1974, Zunker 2005) and significant people (Brown 2003, Zunker 2005, Osipow and Fitzgerald 1996) can also affect one's career decisions.

Hence, career planning entails getting information about intelligence profiles (Krumboltz 1984), career preferences derived through test data (Holland 1997), and identifying career aspirations (Super 1974) or actual occupational choices.

This study would benefit the CICL as this would underscore their need to receive programs on career development and transition. They can be presented with choices based on their skills and personality characteristics. The goal is to lower recidivism rates among them and train them

to be productive members of society. The study will also benefit centers that cater to CICL. The major purpose of the CICL's detention in youth centers is rehabilitation; thus, providing for strong career and transition programs is essential.

This research aims to identify career factors necessary for transition of children in conflict with the law. The research questions are: (1) What are the career preferences of CICL? (2) What are the intelligence profiles of CICL? (3) Is there a significant difference in IQ of CICL when grouped according to career preferences? (4) What occupations would the CICL wants to have? (5) What influenced them in choosing such occupations? (6) What are the CICLs plans upon leaving the Center? and (7) How can the Center help the CICLs in preparing them for future careers?

### **Children in Conflict with the Law**

For Erikson (1980), adolescents are in the stage when the crisis of identity versus identity diffusion should be resolved. He believes that delinquency is characterized by a failure of adolescents to deal with the demands on them (Santrock 1998).

Children in conflict with the law experience a wide range of educational, psychological, medical and social needs. As such, a good rehabilitation program should have a variety of transition programs (Arrezza 2005). For Anderson and Anderson (1996), educational priorities should include reading and phonics instruction. Accordingly, educational planning for youth offenders should include literacy programs, supportive courses for open elementary and high school education, as well as courses to develop their technical skills such as gardening, crafts, welding and computer operations. Vocational training is necessary in order for them to have a source of income after they have served their sentences (Siegel and Welsh 2009). Lessons on cultural and religious education may also be beneficial.

Aside from education, psychiatric services may be needed as the children may suffer from mental disorders (Mahoney 2004). Indeed, some of them may exhibit significant learning or behavioral problems that entitle them to special education and related services (Mathur, Clark and Schoenfeld 2009). As regards health, Martin (2009) noted that in Philippine juvenile centers, CICL may need medication for boils and scabies. All of these are provided in order to help youth offenders in their rehabilitation (Ozdemir 2010).

Unemployed offenders are three times more likely to commit a crime after release (Laughlin 2002). Therefore, it is important for youth offenders to have proper career transition programs, while they are still committed to the rehabilitation centers to provide them with skills to find jobs upon release. Suggested career transition services include giving data on career theory, assessment, job seeking and employability and career information (Laughlin 2002).

### **Research Design and Methodology**

The study, conducted in two phases, used a mixed methods design employing both quantitative and qualitative measures to obtain data.

In the first phase of the study, the researcher gave the Culture Fair Intelligence Test (CFIT) and the Brainard Occupational Preference Inventory (BOPI) to the research participants. Means and standard deviations of intelligence quotient (IQ) scores were arrived at while frequencies and percentages of responses in the BOPI were computed. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was done to test significant difference between IQ and career preferences of the BOPI.

The second phase involved an interview of the research participants to determine their career aspirations, influences on their chosen career, and plans after being released from the Center and their perception on what the Center can do for their careers. General trends of responses were collated and frequencies and percentages were computed.

## Research Locale

The study was conducted in a public juvenile rehabilitation center that offers special education. The Center specifically caters to children in conflict with the law who belong to the 15-18 years old range. Special education services in the form of functional skills training and grade-level based lessons are given. Students learn basic reading in Filipino and English as well as mathematics skills such as number concepts, the four fundamental operations and operations involving money. Since the curricular offering is non-credit, the students are prepared for the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Accreditation and Equivalency examinations. In this way, if they pass the equivalency examinations, they can advance to the next grade level if they choose to study after serving their sentences. Aside from the basic education core courses, male high school students receive non-formal training in welding while female students are trained in arts and crafts.

Teachers characterize enrollment in this Center as fluid. This means that students can be pulled out of the Center, depending on the court's decision, recommendations of social workers and if they commit additional offenses while in the center. Unlike regular public schools that start classes in June, classes start when the child is committed to the center. All classes are non-graded and for those considered to be in the elementary level, lessons are identified based on the highest grade level that the child obtained before his commitment to the center. For the children who have reached high school, vocational training in welding is given to males and arts and crafts lessons are given to females. These serve as their transition program as the center believes that getting vocational training enables its clients to earn a living and avoid committing offenses again.

All teachers in the Center are graduates of a Bachelor degree in Special Education as this is required by the Dept. of Education (DepEd). They received training on managing and educating children with behavior problems and criminal offenses.

## Research Participants

A total of 148 (130 male and 18 female) children took part in the research. The sample had fewer female clients than males which is common among youth rehabilitation centers (Corrado, Odgers and Cohen 2000; Cabilao 2004; Fields and Abrams 2010). Table 1 shows the participants' ages, crimes committed, and highest educational attainment data obtained from the official records of the Center.

**Age.** Participants' ages ranged from 15 to 21 years old. Majority (49%) of them were 17 years old. Participants who were above 18 years old have been committed to the center at a younger age. Their prolonged stay in the Center is attributed to the delays in court procedures.

**Crimes committed.** All juvenile centers classify crimes in six categories as there are a number of cases charged. Crimes that involve stealing, theft, robbery and hold-up are classified under *crimes against property* (70%). Crimes that involve assault, murder, homicide and physical injury are grouped as *crimes against persons* (8%). Possession, use, peddling of drugs like marijuana, *shabu* and cocaine are *drug-related crimes* (14%). Crimes that involve carrying of deadly weapons and firearms are included under *prohibition under special law* (1%). Violations of city ordinances such as the use of *kuliglig* (the use of motorized pedicabs) are included in *others* (1%).

**Grade level.** The CIKL in the study had a range of schooling from zero to fourth year high school. Youth offenders usually have lower years of schooling (Peguero 2009). Table 3 shows that majority (26%) of the respondents finished Grade 5. The respondents who have reached at least Grade 5 said that they had to stop their studies when they were arrested for their offense. Two research participants who were not able to go to school said that their parents find schooling irrelevant and were not sent to school because of poverty.

**TABLE 1** Profile of research participants

| Characteristic                | Frequency                        | %    |     |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|------|-----|
| Age                           | 15                               | 7    | 5   |
|                               | 16                               | 20   | 14  |
|                               | 17                               | 72   | 49  |
|                               | 18                               | 33   | 22  |
|                               | 19                               | 6    | 4   |
|                               | 20                               | 8    | 5   |
|                               | 21                               | 2    | 1   |
|                               | Total                            | 148  | 100 |
| Mean Age                      | 17.29                            |      |     |
| Crimes Committed              | Against property                 | 103  | 70  |
|                               | Drug-related                     | 20   | 14  |
|                               | Against persons                  | 12   | 8   |
|                               | Against chastity                 | 9    | 6   |
|                               | Violation of special provisions  | 3    | 1   |
|                               | Others                           | 1    | 1   |
|                               | Total                            | 148  | 100 |
| Highest Grade Level Completed | 4 <sup>th</sup> year high school | 8    | 5   |
|                               | 3 <sup>rd</sup> year high school | 9    | 6   |
|                               | 2 <sup>nd</sup> year high school | 20   | 14  |
|                               | 1 <sup>st</sup> year high school | 30   | 20  |
|                               | Grade 6                          | 13   | 9   |
|                               | Grade 5                          | 38   | 26  |
|                               | Grade 4                          | 6    | 4   |
|                               | Grade 3                          | 20   | 14  |
|                               | Grade 2                          | 2    | 1   |
|                               | Grade 1                          | 0    | 0   |
|                               | No schooling                     | 2    | 1   |
| Total                         | 148                              | 100% |     |
| Mean                          | 5.99                             |      |     |

## Research Instruments

Standardized tests were used in to determine intellectual abilities and career preferences of the participants. Interviews were used to identify career aspirations, career influences, plans after release, and suggested programs that the Center can implement to help CICL in career planning.

### Culture Fair Intelligence Test.

The Culture Fair Intelligence Test (CFIT) - Scale 2 by Cattell (1998) was used to identify intelligence quotient levels of the participants. The CFIT is a non-verbal intelligence test measuring analytical and reasoning ability in the area of "g" (general) factor intelligence. This test includes classifications, conditions and series that are set in figures. It claims to be free from all cultural influences as language is not used in the questions posed. Reliability and validity coefficients are at .80. The CFIT has a strong relationship with other mainstream intelligence tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Raven's Progressive Matrices and the Stanford Binet. Scale 1 is used for young children, Scale 2 for adolescents, and Scale 3 for adults.

**The Brainard Occupational Preference Inventory.** The Brainard Occupational Preference Inventory, BOPI (Brainard and Brainard 1991) is a standardized test that yields scores in six broad occupational fields for each gender. It identifies six dimensions of occupation sections, namely: (1) Commercial (jobs in accounting, clerical work, selling and business management); (2) Mechanical (occupations in machine design, machine operation, fine manual work and building construction); (3) Professional (medical work, legal and social work, educational work, personnel work); (4) Esthetic (art in form and color, verbal expression, architecture and decoration and music); (5) Scientific (statistical research, physical research, biological research, chemical research); and (6) Agricultural (farm and gardening, small animal raising, forestry, animal husbandry for males and domestic service, health service, community service

and clothing for females). Agricultural activities were answered only by males because the occupations mentioned in this section were traditionally done by males during the time of the test's creation. Personal Service was answered by the females. Test reliability ranged from .88 to .95 for males and .82 to .95 for females (Brainard and Brainard 1991). Filipino translations were made available and were validated by the teachers.

**Interview Questions.** All participants were interviewed individually in Filipino. The questions were: (1) *Ano ang trabahong nais mo?* (What career would you want to have?); (2) *Ano ang nakaimpluwensiya sa iyo na mapili ang ganitong trabaho?* (Who influenced you in choosing this career?); (3) *Ano ang plano mo pagkalabas mo ng Center?* (What are your plans upon release?); and (4) *Paano ka matutulungan ng Center para sa pagpapalano mo ng trabaho?* (What programs can the Center conduct in order to help you plan your future career?). These questions identified career aspirations, career influences, plans after release from the Center and suggested programs for career education.

## Results and Discussion

### Intelligence Profiles

Career planning gives proper consideration to the skills, abilities and intelligence of an individual. In this research, only intelligence was measured through the Culture Fair Intelligence Test (CFIT) Scale 2 as the participants may have problems in understanding standardized achievement tests because of language issues. Table 2 presents their intelligence profile. In the absence of intelligence grouping of the CFIT-Scale 2, intelligence grouping for purposes of discussion is based on Terman's (1983) classification and descriptive profile.

**TABLE 2** Intelligence profile of participants

| Classification | Score        | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| Genius         | 164 and over | 0         | 0       |
| Very Superior  | 148-163      | 1         | 0.7     |
| Superior       | 132-147      | 1         | 0.7     |
| Above Average  | 113-131      | 6         | 4.1     |
| Average        | 84-112       | 36        | 24.3    |
| Below Average  | 64-83        | 77        | 52.0    |
| Low            | 51-63        | 27        | 18.2    |
| Dullness       | Below 52     | 0         | 0       |
|                | Total        | 148       | 100     |

About ninety five percent of the participants scored below 113, indicating that only a mere 5% had cognitive abilities considered to be "above average", "superior" or "very superior". Majority (52%) were in the "Below Average" range. Youth offenders are more often identified for special education as they have more academic deficits measured by standardized achievement and intelligence tests (Harris, Baltodano, Bal, Jolivette and Malcahy 2009; Seck 2010). Further, convicted minors with lower than average intelligence quotients are reported to repeat offenses compared to those who have average intelligence (Kitkani 2009). Youth offenders who have intelligence profiles at the "below average" range are more susceptible to committing crimes (Ward and Tittle 1994; Moffitt and Stouthamer-Loeber 1993; Chitsabesan, Bailey, Williams, Kroll, Kenning and Talbot 2007; Hernandez 2007).

#### *Occupational Preferences*

The Brainard Occupational Preference Inventory (BOPI) identifies six dimensions of occupation sections (Brainard and Brainard 1991): Commercial, Mechanical, Professional, Esthetic, Scientific, and Agricultural. The highest scores obtained by each participant in the BOPI were considered in this discussion. Percentile ranks were not discussed as the career preferences refer to categorical data. Table 3 presents the career preference of the research participants.

**TABLE 3** Career preference of participants

| Career Preference | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Agricultural      | 57        | 39         |
| Professional      | 7         | 5          |
| Esthetic          | 16        | 11         |
| Mechanical        | 27        | 18         |
| Commercial        | 34        | 23         |
| Scientific        | 7         | 5          |
| Total             | 148       | 100        |

The participants obtained high scores in wanting “to plant crops and raise livestock.” This corresponds to the Agricultural dimension (39%). Mullinix, Garcia, Lewis-Lorents and Qazi (2002) reported that this is also the preference of people in disadvantaged groups.

Professional and Scientific were at the bottom of career preference (5%). The researcher learned that those who preferred the Professional domain had career aspirations of becoming social workers or police officers. Four of them expressed their desire to become police officers because they were victims of frame-up and they wanted to catch people who are really involved in crimes.

Careers in the Scientific domain were preferred by the least (5%) number of participants. It was observed that the participants who had intelligence profiles in the above average to very superior range chose this domain.

#### *Differences of Intelligence Profile and Career Preference*

To test whether there is a significant difference between intelligence profile and career preference, ANOVA was used as a statistical treatment. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12 was used to generate data (table 4).

**TABLE 4** Difference in intelligence quotient scores (CFIT) and career preferences (BOPI)

| Career Preference | N   | Mean IQ Score | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------|-----|---------------|----------------|
| Agricultural      | 57  | 85.49         | 15.16          |
| Commercial        | 7   | 70.28         | 13.80          |
| Esthetic          | 16  | 67.88         | 9.08           |
| Mechanical        | 27  | 78.63         | 4.69           |
| Professional      | 34  | 63.82         | 5.11           |
| Scientific        | 7   | 119.71        | 10.46          |
| Total             | 148 |               |                |

According to these data, Scientific domain obtained the highest mean among the six groups (119.71). The research participants who chose Scientific also had higher CFIT intelligence quotient scores. This reflects the observation that academically gifted people prefer to have more technical-scientific jobs (Stewart 1999; Mei-Tang and Smith 1999).

Variability was relatively more consistent in Mechanical ( $SD = 4.69$ ). Other groups had higher standard deviations as they were chosen by research participants who were in the very low to high average range of intelligence.

There was a significant difference between the participants' intelligence quotient scores and career preferences of the BOPI,  $F(5, 142) = 32.494, p = .000$ . A multiple comparison (Scheffe) test indicated that the group difference accounting for the significant  $F$  value was for Scientific with Agricultural, Esthetic ( $p = .000$ ), Commercial ( $p = .000$ ), Mechanical ( $p = .000$ ), and Professional ( $p = .000$ ). This means that those who had Scientific as a career preference had higher CFIT IQ scores than those who chose other professions.

### Career Aspirations

Career aspirations are occupations which an individual expresses a strong desire to pursue. In the interview, the researcher observed that the participants immediately gave responses on what occupations they wish to pursue. Initially, the researcher wanted to validate information on the career preferences measured by the BOPI and subject the data to statistical analysis. However, their career aspirations were not tested via ANOVA as there were careers not mentioned in the BOPI, making the two sets of data incomparable. Table 5 presents the career aspirations of the participants.

**TABLE 5** Career aspirations of participants

| Aspiration   | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Construction (construction worker, porter, painter, carpenter, welder) | 63        | 43%        |
| Vending and Sales (Vendor, salesclerk)                                 | 30        | 20%        |
| Driver ( <i>Pedicab, Kuliglig</i> , Tricycle)                          | 14        | 9%         |
| Police and Legal Occupations (Police, Lawyer)                          | 11        | 7%         |
| Health Services (Nurse, Doctor, Caregiver)                             | 8         | 5%         |
| Food Services (Farmer, Cook)   | 4         | 3%         |
| Art  | 5         | 3%         |
| Education  | 4         | 3%         |
| Do not Know  | 5         | 3%         |
| Others (Treasure hunter, jockey, attendant, band member)               | 4         | 3%         |
| TOTAL  | 148       | 100        |

The children who chose construction, vending and driving activities as their intended jobs said that they had previous experience in this field. This may account for the disparity between the top occupational preference and the top career occupation. The top answer in this portion was Construction activities (43%). A participant explained his choice, saying "*Madali lang sa akin ang mag-kargador dahil hindi ko kailangang mag-aral.*" (It is easy for me to become a porter because I do not need to study for it.) This sentiment reflects Sastre and Mullet's (1992) assertion that people who are in the lower income bracket choose occupations that require lesser academic preparation.

Twenty (20) percent of the respondents chose vending and sales. Male participants who chose this had previous experience in selling street food, *sampaguita* and scrap materials while females had previous experience as sales ladies.

Driving occupations (9%) were identified by those who were drivers prior to their detention. They said that this is the only occupation that they know how to do. Their fathers taught them how to drive and this was passed on to them.

*Influences of Career Choice*

The family plays an important role in children's choice of career. Children see their parents work and this influence their choice of work (Super 1974).

**TABLE 6** Influences of career choice

| Source of Influence | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Family              | 96        | 65         |
| Experience          | 35        | 24         |
| Teacher             | 12        | 8          |
| Do not Know         | 5         | 3          |
| TOTAL               | 148       | 100        |

The research participants who answered *family* (65%) as the factor that influenced their career choice said that they wanted to be like their parents. Indeed, studies have shown that parents are considered as career influences (Uzoamaka and Greenhaus 2000; Zunker 2005).

Data also show that there were only a few research participants (3%) who did not know what work they would want to have in the future. Typically, adolescents would not know what they want to do in life (Staff, Harris and Sabates 2010). Perhaps, this can be attributed to the fact that most of the participants were forced to work at an early age. Krumboltz (1984) believes that early experiences affect career decisions.

*Plans for the Future*

Most of the participants look forward to their release and plan to change (*pagbabagong buhay*). This entails making a pledge not to commit any crime again. Of the 148 children, only four see themselves as reverting to the crime they committed after being released, if they do not get a job.

**TABLE 7** Plans after release from the Center

| Plan                | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Work                | 97        | 66         |
| Finish High School  | 18        | 12         |
| Vocational Training | 15        | 10         |
| Finish College      | 14        | 9          |
| Look for relatives  | 1         | 1          |
| Do not know         | 3         | 2          |
| TOTAL               | 148       | 100        |

Work is the immediate plan after release from the Center by majority (66%) of the participants. They said that they previously had jobs. Despite the fact that they were earning, they were tempted to commit crimes as their low salaries could not sustain them and their families. Similar to Amongo's (1986) study that had clients coming from low-income groups, poverty is seen as a barrier for the participants to finish their studies. Some participants would rather work than spend their time studying as they find it irrelevant.

Graduating from high school (12%) is the priority of those who have reached at least freshman year of secondary education. These participants believed that graduating from high school will enable them to get better paying jobs. A high school diploma will enable them to work in factories and department stores. They also perceived that those who do not get high school degrees do not qualify for jobs that have higher benefits such as getting social security.

Vocational training (10%) ranks third in the plans of youth offenders to attend to once they were released from the center. Those who answered this felt too old to complete elementary or high school. They just wanted to have non-formal education training such as in carpentry, cooking and animal-raising.

#### *Perceptions on how the Center can help them in career planning*

All juvenile centers in the country are created to provide rehabilitation. The research participants were interviewed on how the center can help them in this area.

**TABLE 8** Suggested programs for transition

| Program              | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Vocational Training  | 44        | 30%        |
| Career Education     | 43        | 29%        |
| Graded curriculum    | 17        | 11%        |
| Functional Education | 16        | 11%        |
| Values Education     | 11        | 7%         |
| Do not know          | 17        | 11%        |
| TOTAL                | 148       | 100        |

The research participants felt that the welding and crafts classes offered are not sufficient to prepare them for work. As such, a more varied selection of vocational courses may be included in the vocational training (30%).

Job placement is also necessary as they need to work in order to survive and support their families. Some expressed their wish to engage in subcontracting activities similar to adults who are detained at the New Bilibid Prisons. Through this, they can earn a living and be of help to their families. Other participants suggested that they be given assistance in finding jobs.

Having a graded curriculum (11%) is seen as important by those who were admitted in the Center for at least two years. Getting a high school diploma while they are committed in the Center would help them have a sense of achievement.

As a whole, results of the study underscore the need for career education as part of the

transition program for children in conflict with the law. Findings suggest that transition programs for youth offenders call for the inclusion of the following: (1) vocational skills development programs; (2) functional skills programs; and (3) college-preparatory programs. Vocational skills development is needed by those who wish to work after serving their sentences. Skills such as carpentry, animal raising and cooking can be offered. Agriculture training, as a top career preference, may also be given as part of the program. Functional skills program can include lessons in functional reading and mathematics. College-preparatory programs should entail credit courses so that they can earn an elementary or a high-school diploma while committed in the Center.

### **Implications on Transition Programs and Services**

Children in conflict with the law (CICL) can benefit from a well-structured transition program in order for them to have options other than commit crimes after they have been released. These programs should enable them to train for a job or to continue their studies.

As regards literacy programs in youth centers, current practice shows that the lessons provided are using a non-graded scheme. Despite the fact that the lessons follow what is prescribed by the Department of Education (DepEd) in a specific grade level, students cannot be promoted to the next grade unless they pass the Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) examination. Thus, students who are qualified to take the examination should be able to gain mastery of their lessons while at the center. Preparation for the ALS should include regular sessions for review as well as provisions for review materials and practice exercises while the children are in their respective cells. This enables them to study on their free time. However, pencils and pens are banned in the dormitories as these may be used as deadly weapons. Because there have been incidents wherein pencils and pens were used to stab fellow detainees, an area should be set aside for

after-school educational activities. Students may use a classroom that is not in use for studying while being monitored by their house-parents. Further, keeping the students busy may help them keep their minds off from committing other offenses while in the Center. For those who choose not to continue with their education, a program to develop their functional literacy and basic mathematics skills may prove useful once they are released from the center.

It is important for children in conflict with the law to identify their career interests and abilities while at the Center to help them plan for their future. At present, testing centers in the Philippines only have test materials from abroad, the content of which may not be applicable to Filipinos. Career inventories that are made by and for Filipinos may be utilized to obtain a more appropriate assessment.

The welding (for males) and crafts (for females) classes as the only choice of vocational training in transition programs proved to be insufficient. As such, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) may provide significant assistance in improving the vocational programs in youth centers. Also, teachers and social workers may recommend the transfer of institution to other juvenile centers such as the National Training School for Boys at Tanay, Rizal for those who are interested in pursuing careers in Agriculture. Courts can allow transfer of children to other institutions upon recommendation of the social workers.

### **Implications to Assessment and Setting of Educational Priorities**

Assessment is an integral part of educating students with special needs. Because, Special Education recognizes the individual differences of people, setting of priorities must be individualized. However, there is a limited number of teachers in youth centers. This impedes assessment and creation of an individualized educational plan (IEP). In addition, students get released or transferred to other institutions every so

often, making it difficult for them to follow a one-year program.

Considering these problems, an educational portfolio of each student may be made. Assessment of youth offenders referred to the Center can be done upon their entry. Since the social workers of the Center conduct intake interviews and case reports, the teachers can also assess the skills of the students so they can set educational priorities. These priorities are needed when drafting the student's individualized educational plan (IEP). Assessment results and the IEP can be part of the educational portfolio of the student and be passed on to the next teacher. With this, education of the student continues whether the court decides on center transfer, sentence to the city jail, or be released. The next teacher can do follow-up assessment and create new priorities, based on the student's progress.

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