

CHAPTER NINE

An Overview of Need and Usage

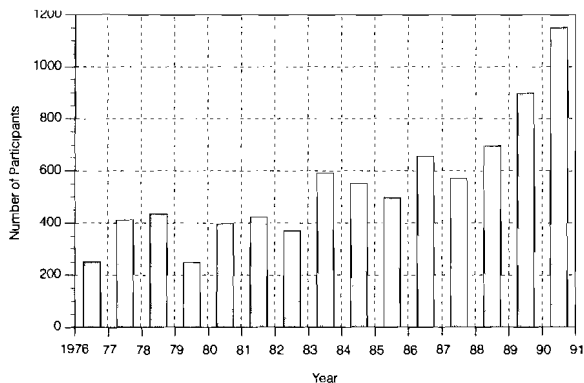
To the best of my knowledge the way in which consultants are used by those engaged in church and community work has not been comprehensively researched. A useful picture can, however, be obtained from the experience of Avec (cf p 6 *et al*) because it provided a wide range of consultancy services. Full records were kept, services were evaluated by consultors and consultants, MARC Europe carried out a postal survey of participants which was supplemented by structured interviews with a selection of participants. Essential information and data about the services have been published.¹

These consultancy services were provided by an ecumenical team of which I was a member. It had two full-time members, one or two part-time and a group of associates. Over a period of fifteen years there were eighty associates representative of six denominations and various Roman Catholic religious orders. They came from various parts of Britain and Ireland. Between them they had experience of most kinds of church and community work both in the U.K. and overseas.² At any one time there would be roughly twenty of them active. By drawing upon this accumulated experience an attempt is made in the first part of this chapter to profile the things about which practitioners sought consultancy help through Avec and to describe what they valued. The second part examines an extended consultancy relationship with Dr. T. R. Batten which was fully recorded. Part three is a note about the limitations and dangers of consultancy services.

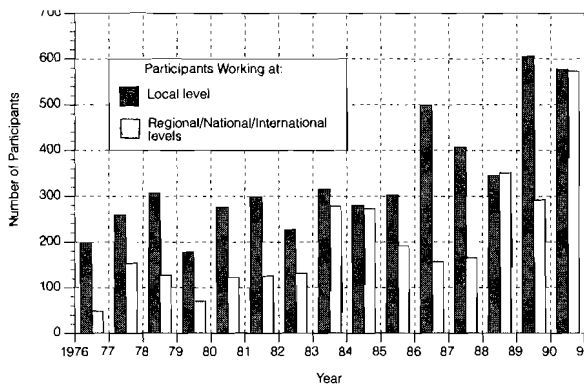
I THOSE WHO CONSULTED THROUGH AVEC

A brief overview of those who used the Avec consultancy services helps to contextualise the information about the consultancy subject matter. From 1976 to 1991, the period from which the information in this chapter is drawn, Avec staff had conducted 357 work consultancy courses of one kind or another. These ranged from half-day conferences to a two-year part-time post-graduate diploma in church and community development, with ten-day work and theory courses as the central core of the programme. They had also provided consultancy services to or worked on 139 projects, mostly in the U.K., though some were in Africa and Ireland. All this means that Avec had worked with over 7,500 people of ten denominations, including almost 4,000 Roman Catholics, 2,000 Methodists and 1,500 Anglicans.³

These services were used by people at all levels (5,000 at local and 2,500 at regional and national levels) by clergy (2,800), religious, deaconesses and church workers (3,800) and lay people (1,000). The subject matter was varied: it included most forms of local church and community work and specialist work with, for example, the profoundly deaf and travellers. There were courses for specific groups such as missionaries (on furlough and returning to work in the UK), religious (for



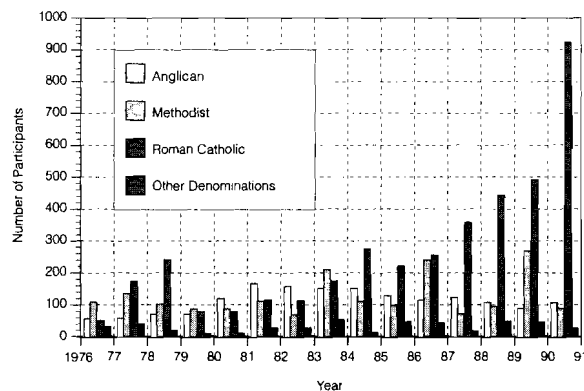
GRAPH 1: Total Number of Participants Each Year



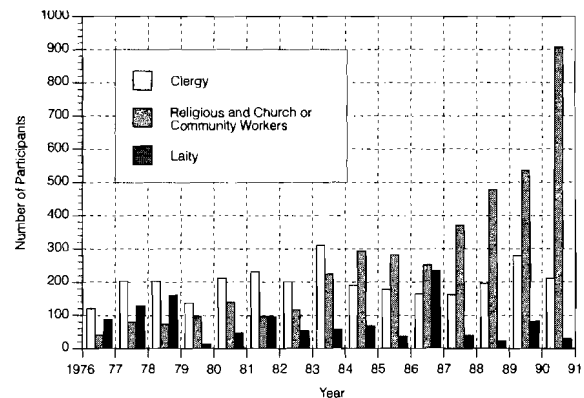
GRAPH 2: Levels at which Participants were Working

NOTES to Graphs

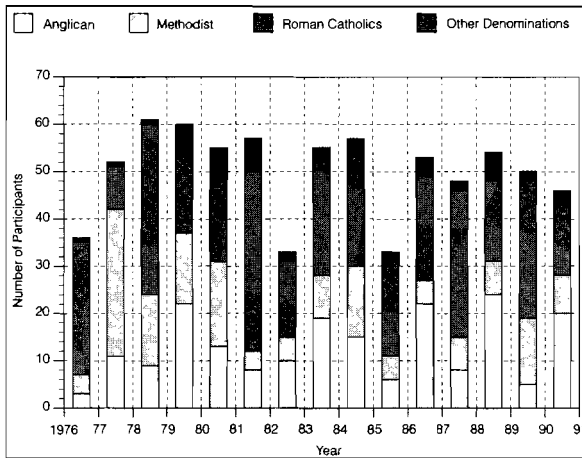
- The years run from September to August
- Regarding Graphs 3 and 4: Large number of Roman Catholics in 1990-91 due to working with Chapters of Religious Orders.



GRAPH 3: Participants by Denomination



GRAPH 4: Participants by Church and Community Workers, Clergy, Laity and Religious



Display 9:2 Participation by Denomination in Avec Ten-day Work Consultancy Courses

superiors and provincials), people working regionally and nationally.⁴ The graphs and charts in Displays 9:1 and 2 give a break down of these bald statistics.⁵ Those who participated were widely representative of church and community work in every part of the British Isles (including Northern Ireland), The Republic of Ireland, and some fifteen other countries.

1. Feelings and Needs

Those who used Avec's consultancy services were healthy practitioners who came in many different emotional states. They were variously excited about new projects and ideas, happy with things but wanting to develop and improve themselves and their work, bemused by events, concerned and worried about dysfunctional working and personal relationships, depressed by their performance, stressed out by what they experienced as intractable problems. They wanted and needed consultancy help, not counselling. Several felt needs were dominant and recurring.

One was the deep desire to get their minds around their situation, what was happening to them as practitioners and positive and negative events they were experiencing. They wanted to get on top of things intellectually, emotionally and spiritually; they wanted to get to the heart of whatever matter was concerning them. Time and again, bishops and chairmen of districts, for instance, said that they desperately needed to discern the central thrust of their job. All kinds of practitioners wanted mental maps and working models which put things into better conceptual order and enabled them to work with the whole and all the parts more effectively.

A second felt need was to check things out. They wanted to test their plans and the ideas and beliefs underlying them against the knowledge and experience of others and to contextualise them. This was closely associated with a third need, confidence building. They needed help and moral, spiritual, technical and academic support for themselves and their work programme. Help and support in decision making was a fourth need. And the fifth was help with specific situations and problems. This aspect is discussed in the next section.

Some fundamental needs suffused all the others and turned them into wants. All those seeking consultancy help deeply desired the inner assurance that they were being faithful to their calling and effective whether things appeared to be going well or badly. It was this assurance that gave them the inner disposition—a sense of vocational integrity and of well-being—which enabled them to apply themselves energetically, happily and creatively to their work and ministry and to gain satisfaction from it. Life and work lost their lustre without this assurance.

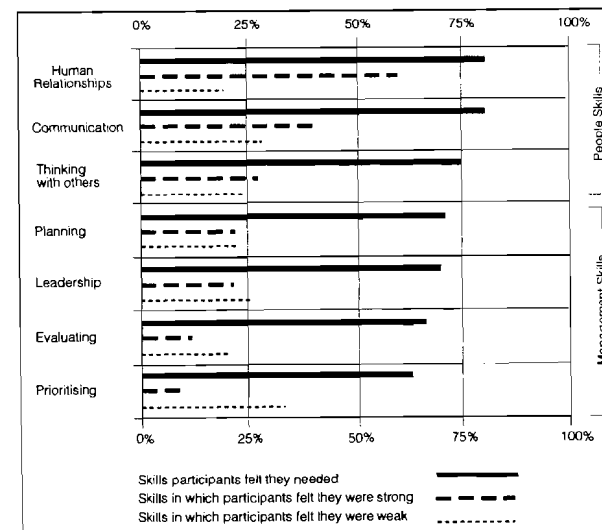
Professor Stamp's insights about the importance of "flow" in relation to the state of well-being at work⁶ has helped me to understand and work at these needs. (This concept is referred to earlier also on p 388.) This psychological and spiritual state can be experienced in any and all kinds of work and working environments. It is not to be associated exclusively with work programmes that are or appear to be successful, although generally it is. Vocational unease can be experienced by those whose ministry and work seem to be flourishing. This inner state of well-being and the work and vocational flow that goes with it, is experienced in all kinds of good and bad circumstances and working relationships and in conflict as well as in collaboration. When it is profound it engenders a sense of vocational fulfilment, satisfaction and harmony. Purposeful engagement is one of its key characteristics: positive engagement, that is, with everything and everyone to do with one's work, with self and with God. Words to describe this wonderful experience are difficult to find. It is accompanied by a sense of rightness and fulfilling one's vocational destiny, the feeling of being in the right place and doing the right thing at the right time in the right way. "This is where I ought to be and this is what I am meant to do". This state is not without doubt, particularly the feeling that it is all too good to be true. Counterfeits of this state are dangerous.

Naturally, this state of well-being has its ups and downs. When it is dislocated, consultants and consultants must do all they can to reinstate it on the bedrock of vocational, personal and contextual realism. Well-being is the antithesis to being under dysfunctional stress. People in stress, says Professor Stamp, are "tired rather than alert, dull rather than creative, prone to poor judgements which deplete self-confidence and increase self-consciousness, ill at ease with the work as it progresses, constantly questioning self and others as the work proceeds".

Work and vocational consultancy can help people to move out of the stress-work-mode and enter into the well-being-work-mode *or* establish themselves more firmly in the well-being mode.⁷ It has this potential because it concentrates upon what makes for well-being and development of people at work *and* the well-being and development of their work. It is firmly based upon a body of knowledge and praxis derived from thoroughly researched experience of what helps workers for human and spiritual betterment to get into the well-being mode in all the different contexts they are likely to meet.

The MARC Europe survey records what consultants said they wanted from the Avec services. It is by no means a comprehensive picture because of the limitations of the questionnaire and the response rate: 45% from the ten-day courses, 85% from missionary courses and low for the project work because of difficulties encountered in contacting people. Nonetheless the survey gives some useful pointers which tally with the staff's experience.⁸

The survey of the ten-day courses (described in Chapter Seven) showed that people attended them because of a felt need to extend their skills in human relationships, in communication, in thinking with others and in church and community development work. Display 9:3 shows what respondents felt they needed for their jobs and those things in which they felt strong, and where they felt weak.⁹ (MARC Europe also surveyed what people got from these courses—see Section 4 of this chapter.) Responses from those in the project work added the following to this list: to improve group work, to clarify objectives, to prepare for chapters of religious orders.¹⁰



Display 9:3 Felt Needs, Strengths and Weaknesses

Missionaries on furlough said they attended consultancy courses to evaluate the work in which they were engaged overseas and to get guidance on specific issues and problems. Interestingly these consultancy sessions worked admirably even though the missionaries had quite diverse jobs. About a third of them were in pastoral ministry of one kind or another, but the others were variously involved in administration, agriculture, basic communities, education, engineering, medicine, social development, theological training and theological education by extension.¹¹ What they had in common was working with people on equal terms in countries and cultures other than their own in the ministry and mission of the Christian Church.

Missionaries returning to work in Britain and Ireland said that they attended courses and consultancy sessions to help them to adapt to U.K. culture and church and community work and to discuss key problems they experienced: materialism, pace of life; indifference to the Third World.

2. Consultancy Subject Matter

The more detailed picture of the consultancy subject matter which follows has been obtained by reviewing the experience of Avec in general and my own in particular. It covers the main categories without claiming to be exhaustive. Much more detailed

work could be done when it is possible to research the vast number of papers in the Avec Archives.¹² For example, it would be useful to examine differences in felt needs between practitioners of different denominations working in different socio-religious contexts locally, regionally and nationally. But it is not possible for me to undertake or organize the research necessary to correlate and compare these factors.

The subject matter experienced by Avec staff and associates takes five forms. First, there is that which relates to living, current work issues of one kind or another. Then there is that which has to do with consultants as practitioners and their skills. Third, there is that which has to do with consultants' vocation and their development. Fourth, there is that which has to do with the reflection, study and research of phenomena underlying extended and diverse programmes of work. Finally there are the underlying approaches to working with and for people. But, by the very nature of consultancy, starting with a particular subject invariably leads to others. For instance, any discussion about current work situations and issues invariably involves considering the nature of the worker's involvement, aspects of his/her vocation and other experiences of similar phenomena. When the subject matter is vocational development, all other areas are in play.

Generally speaking there is an immediacy, if not an urgency about the subject matter. Certainly, this is so in the first three areas. Decisions have to be made. Action is called for. Events and circumstances are pressing. Inaction could incur heavy penalties. These are the kind of situations in which people can learn fast; in fact consultancy can be a form of emergency learning and training.

(a) *Current Work*

Aspects of current work for which consultancy help was sought were legion. They are organised here under the following headings:

- reviewing and analysing situations
- designing and planning projects
- examining problems and cases
- working with people who differ significantly
- promoting creative participation and sharing
- conflict and faction
- decision making and taking
- preparation for significant events
- event management
- ethical issues and decisions
- making radical work transitions
- expressing and examining feelings.

Reviewing and Analysing Work Situations. In this category the totality of a consultant's work situation was the subject matter of the consultations. Typical examples of work situations over which consultancy help was sought were: local churches and parishes; circuits, dioceses, districts; communities and provinces of religious orders; national and international organizations related to aspects of the work of the church such as mission or social responsibility; Christian charitable agencies focusing on children and people with handicaps.

This mode of consultancy involves conceptualising and examining the parts and the whole of the consultant's organization, the people involved in it, its culture, ethos and context and its structures and infra-structures. Aims of the organization have to be defined. It is necessary to discover how the parts and the whole are functioning and malfunctioning and what energizes and de-energizes the systems and those engaged in them. Significant patterns in the way in which things are proceeding have to be conceptualised in order to assess what is evolving satisfactorily and to determine what is blocking progress and/or is ripe for development. Doing this inevitably involves considering what consultants think and feel, the purposes that motivate them and the beliefs and spirituality which galvanize them.

Then, as we have seen, the processes must change from the analytic to the design mode: from conceptualising what is happening to figuring out what could possibly work better. In turn that can lead to modifying or re-shaping programmes and/or organizations. A systematic presentation of the stages and sequences of these analytical processes is given earlier, cf pp 79-83.

People came to need and want this kind of consultancy help in different ways. Some simply felt the need to review and develop their work although they were not aware of pressing problems or possible openings for development. Frequently they said, "I want to take a step back and take an objective look at things". Others were vaguely dissatisfied about things without being able to put their finger on the source of their unease. Yet others were facing difficulties ranging in severity from that which irritated to that which profoundly affected them and the whole of their work.

Designing and Planning Projects. Consultations about projects were quite common. Examples are: establishing a base for a Roman Catholic religious order to work ecumenically in Portadown;¹³ a local church project to meet the needs of handicapped people in the local neighbourhood; a project to strengthen interdependent working relationships between the Methodist Church in Britain and those of three countries in West Africa¹⁴; a project to promote shared ministry in an Anglican diocese.

With projects, the ethos is generally one of enthusiasm and hope associated with new ventures in relation to things of great importance to those involved: generally they have far reaching implications for the existing organizational programmes.

Examining Problems and Cases. Problems and cases formed a significant part of Avec's consultancy work. They came in all kinds of shapes and sizes and varied greatly in complexity and in their resistance to resolution. One set of problems was the things that prevented consultants from doing what they needed to do to achieve their purposes and to translate their ideas into creative action. They derived, not from past mistakes, but from future hopes. They were the "how to do something we cannot do" problems. How, for instance, to establish working relationships with people who differ from us significantly? How to make contact? How to say "no" to attractive opportunities for which I simply have not got time? Another set of problems related to things that had gone wrong either through events that could not have been anticipated or through human error or sin. They are "the how to put something right" problems. How to sort out snarled up relationships in a church or a team? How to stop or prevent a person or group dominating an organization?

Generally speaking cases were about a sequence of inter-personal events which led to a deterioration or breakdown of human relationships with serious consequences for all concerned. They covered any and every possible combination of working relationships to be found in church and community work. One case went something like this: a vicar started a group for young people belonging to the church; he handed over leadership to a young schoolteacher who, to extend the influence of the group and with the backing of the church council, opened it to non-church young people who became integrated into the club but not the church; the vicar got a new curate who showed interest in the young people's group; the curate argued that the club should be for church young people only, others should be expelled and he got the vicar to side with him; the leader resigned and, with ninety per cent of the members, set up an independent club in much inferior accommodation. The distressed vicar sought consultancy help.

Major topics of problems and cases were: authority; communication; committees; friction conflict and faction; work-overload; establishing and keeping to priorities; self-management; pastoral management of church and community work and paid and voluntary workers; conflicting and confusing expectations about role and function; decision making and taking; promoting egalitarian participation; getting people to take responsibility; leadership and using the non-directive approach. They also related to major issues such as: authoritarianism, clericalism, racism, sexism, deprivation and injustice.

Working With People Who Differ Significantly. This was a recurrent theme. Sometimes it was colleagues who differed from the consultants in their ideas, approaches and orientations. At other times it was differences between people in church and community work programmes. In some instances, such as Ireland, the differences caused acute problems and were frequently associated with violence.

Promoting Creative Participation and Sharing. Another common subject was participation and sharing. Consultants really wanted to see more people participating and sharing creatively in all kinds of ways. But very often they were concerned about, and sometimes fearful of losing control.¹⁵ Influenced by what was increasingly seen to be politically correct, there was a tendency to think exclusively and unrealistically of one mode of sharing through egalitarian partnerships,¹⁶ whereas, as noted earlier, sharing and participating can and must take many different modes and forms in church and community work. Consequently they had a propensity to over use totally open forms and under use other forms. This had generated unnecessary difficulties, with some of which they were struggling. They needed help with the praxis of participation, the many modes it could take and the practicalities of engendering constructive sharing.

Conflict and Faction. Consultancy help was sought in relation to infinitely varied forms of conflict and faction between people and in and between groups, churches, organizations and communities. Conflict and faction are noted separately because, whilst they occur under other headings, they were frequent presenting themes. Deciding how best to examine the conflict and faction is part of the consultancy process: should it be through one method (situational analysis, studying cases, treating it as a problem) or a combination of these and, if so, in what order?

Decision Making and Taking. Decision making (involvement in processes which contribute to decision taking) and decision taking (acts of deciding) were common consultancy subjects. There were the decisions that consultants themselves had to take, and there were the collective decisions that they had to help others to make and take or to make and take with them. Common problems were: what part should consultants play and what contributions should they make towards making and taking decisions? Which decisions should they themselves take and how should they communicate them? Who should participate and how to get them to do so qualitatively? How to maximise egalitarian participation? How to get groups of people with conflicting ideas and interests and significant differences of approach to make good decisions ideally by consensus? Such questions arise under other headings. Again, they are listed separately because they were often presenting problems under the heading of "decisions".

Preparation for Significant Events. Significant events are common features of church and organizational life. One form that they take is people assembling locally, regionally, nationally or internationally to discuss, debate, argue and decide about things of importance. Examples of these assemblies are: meetings; conferences; consultations; councils; synods; workshops; chapters (meetings of people in a religious order which review community life, ministry and work). Consultants who had key roles to play in such events sought help with difficulties they had foreseen or encountered in planning, organizing or leading them. They found consultancy services helped them: to define purposes; to determine how to get the most effective kind of egalitarian participation through plenary and sub-group work; to form groups and to prepare people to staff and service them; to determine the input required.

Common features of these consultancy sessions were: considering carefully who would be participating; speculating about the inter-personal dynamics of the event; deciding whether to invite those assembled to work out their own purpose and programme or to present possibilities for them to adopt or adapt; constructing detailed flow charts of the stages and steps by which the purposes of the assembly would be most likely achieved; deciding the criteria for subgroups, working out viable tasks and the questions which would generate discussion; selecting and preparing sub-group leaders; gathering the findings of the groups and getting them considered in plenary sessions; establishing decision making procedures either by consensus and/or by majority votes;¹⁷ and composing introductions to conferences and sessions. Doing this thoroughly is demanding and time consuming. Most people find it absorbing, animating and constructive.

However, there are situations in which clergy and laity involved in these events feel they cannot lead them for various reasons: they have a vested interest in the outcome; they are not equally acceptable to all the parties in conflict; they cannot acquire the skills required in time; interpersonal relationships are too tricky. In such circumstances the growing practice is to invite people to "facilitate" the event (cf p 366). On occasions such an arrangement is the best way to proceed. However, as noted earlier (p 362) before consultants accept such a role they should check out with the consultants if it is the best arrangement and, if it is, how to avoid any

disadvantages it might have. Inter alia, this involves looking at alternatives, such as them doing it themselves with or without consultancy help.

Another example of consultancy about significant events is that of preparing individuals or groups to meet other individuals and groups to discuss things of import. Apart from the standard things—establishing purposes and formulating opening gambits—this involves speculating about the thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears of other parties: standing in their shoes; seeing things from their perspective. Doing just this through role playing dramatically affected the outcome of a historic first ever meeting between members of the Conference of Religious and the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference. Through role playing bishops the religious realised they were in danger of relating to the hierarchy of today as though they were the hierarchy of yesterday. Such an approach would have been catastrophic whereas the one they adopted as a consequence of this insight was highly productive.

Event Management.¹⁸ “Event management”, a term borrowed from organizational praxis, catches the essence of an aspect of consultancy subject matter. It is about the action required by leaders in organizations and communities when the members have been perturbed by events and there are significant differences of opinion and conflict about the action to be taken. Such events could be the collapse of valued projects, a tragic death, a local or national scandal, an act of vandalism or terrorism, confusing or divisive statements about beliefs, the threat of the closure of a church, school or community service agency. Whatever it is, the event is high on the agenda of informal networks or grapevines; public statements are being made; people may be forming action and pressure groups. What action should a leader take? That is another frequent consultancy subject.

Ethical Issues and Decisions. Ethical issues were raised frequently by consultants working overseas in different cultures. Difficult moral predicaments were experienced, for instance, in societies where bribery and corruption were commonly practised. Missionaries found themselves in situations where the only way to get desperately needed supplies such as medicine was to bribe people. They agonised over their decisions as they grappled with conflicting human, moral and spiritual demands and tried to establish when they should go with prevailing practices, “work the system”, and when and how they should challenge them.¹⁹

Making Radical Work Transitions. Voluntary work and vocational transitions, especially those that are deeply desired, induce the excitement and anxiety of new beginnings and opportunities. However, leaving the old can be traumatic. Involuntary transitions are painful and can be debilitating and soul destroying. Consultancy processes which enable people to examine transitions of both kinds and the emotions associated with them have proved to be extremely creative. Defining the nature of the transition is one aspect of that process. Of itself this is invariably helpful. One person I helped to do this was a man in training for diaconal ministry. Before he entered college he had been unemployed for some time. Getting to the underlying nature of the transition led him to articulate for the first time that the transition that he had found/was finding most problematic had to do with the control over the use of his time: as an unemployed person he had almost total freedom to use this time as he liked; as a student he had to fit into a highly structured timetable;

as a deacon he himself would have to structure large parts of his time constructively. Seeing the nature of those changes enabled him to work more creatively at things which had niggled him during the two years he had been in training but which he had never been able to get a purchase on.

Consultancy sessions for missionaries (now known as “mission partners”) soon after they returned from overseas and before they started work in the United Kingdom, have proved to be particularly helpful.²⁰ Such sessions were designed to help ex-missionaries in transition to work at their feelings, to evaluate their experience, to articulate what they had learned and to determine its value for their new work. To do this they had to overcome the tendency to devalue or over value their missionary experience. It also helped them to determine their initial objectives for the new phase of their working lives, including changes they might wish to make in the way they related to their spouses or families, and the ways in which they worked. Following these sessions a year later with consultancy sessions on the work in which they were actually engaged did help people to make better work and personal transitions than they would otherwise have done. By this time the subject matter was very much the same as that on which other people in the U.K. wanted to work, apart that is from reviewing the transition they were making. The effectiveness was even greater when spouses shared in the process through residential courses and when their children accompanied them and pursued appropriate exercises about their transition.

What was learnt from working with mission partners was widely used to good effect in consultancy sessions with people making all kinds of transitions such as those:

- from being a theological student to a curate or probationer minister, a curate to a vicar, a vicar to a bishop, a minister to being a superintendent or a chairman, etc.;
- from being a religious in a teaching order with its own school to a religious social worker/pastoral worker in a community of many apostolates;
- from living religious life in large communities to living in small ones;²¹
- from being a member of a religious order to being a provincial and from being a provincial to being a member;
- from work to retirement.

Expressing and Examining Feelings. An important aspect of the subject matter of consultations is the feelings that consultants have about their work and the effects it has upon their family and friends, the church and their socio-religious context (cf pp 83-86). As we have seen, it is of the utmost importance to treat these as a proper part of work analysis and design and to demonstrate that at one level they can be examined and studied in the same way that ideas can. Therefore, whenever necessary and possible, consultations provided opportunities for consultants to express and examine their emotions related to their work and vocation.

Consultants frequently needed help in handling positive and negative feedback (cf pp 342-343). This is an increasing need in these days of greater openness, egalitarian participation and accountability through evaluation and assessment.

Missionaries needed opportunities to express and explore their feelings. Most of them were intellectually and factually quite well informed about what was happening in Britain. Their unease was on the emotional level. They were often bewildered by the pace of life, confused and incensed by the variety of goods in the supermarket which seemed obscene in the light of the poverty they had experienced and angered by the attitudes they found to international affairs, racial questions, use of money and wastage of resources. It was particularly disturbing when these attitudes were within their own family circles.²²

(b) *The Consultor as Practitioner*

Consultors often needed and wanted to focus on themselves as practitioners. The emphasis shifted from the work and the consultor to the consultor their vocation and the work. Consequently there were many circumstances when consultors themselves became the primary and proper subject matter of consultations. Amongst them were the following: when, for one reason or another, consultors were dissatisfied with their performance and wanted/needed to adopt different approaches or to develop new skills; when they felt under- or over-used, under- or over-stretched; when they were experiencing a crisis of confidence; when they were simply unhappy without apparent cause; when things were not working out for them. Consultancy sessions on these things were often about the consultor's spirituality, beliefs, purposes, convictions, approaches, theories, ideas, calling, that is, upon the infra structure of the consultor's working life. Discussing them called for sensitivity because they were part of the soul of a consultor. At the same time they were often about the interaction between that which motivated and energized and the actualities of the work in which the consultor was engaged. All this was examined through consultancy unless and until it proved to be ineffective, which rarely happened, and then it could be a good and safe gateway into counselling or whatever else was needed.

(c) *Vocations, Their Maintenance and Development*

Closely related consultations were about the state and maintenance or development of the consultor's vocation. Such consultations differed from those described in the previous section which were about particular episodes in the consultor's vocational journey. These were about the past, present and future of a consultor's vocation. Quite commonly a wide range of positive and negative work experiences were analysed, evaluated, reflected upon and prayed about in relation to spiritual experiences and newly emerging convictions about what needs to be done and achieved in church and society. Vocational journeys were teased out to help consultors discern what they were being called to do in the future. New vocational trajectories were extrapolated. A vivid example of this occurred in a co-consultancy session with a group of missionaries on furlough. Little progress was being made in attempts to help a consultor discern what she was being called to do next. Probing the alternatives and assessing their potential locked us in the impasse she was experiencing. Something then led me to suggest that she trace out the main stages of the critical path of her vocational career. That she did, there and then, with help from the group. Plotting the various future possibilities as trajectories of the past path threw new light upon them and the way ahead became clear surprisingly

quickly. By the next morning all the members of the group had plotted out their vocational paths and started to review the next phase of their ministry and mission! Dianne Clutterbuck expressed aspects of this in a different way:

I have to go on making sure that the work and the vocation are in harmony . . . the vocation is not the work but I've got to make sure that the work is the vocation. It's very easy to get out of that. In the position I'm in now I could start thinking, "Well, you know, this is OK. I like being a church bureaucrat. What could I do next? What other office could I hold within the Church?" I'm sure it would be quite possible to continue along that line. But I don't think it's the right way. I think it's rather going back to the vocation and saying, "Where is it leading me now? What work fits with it? What should I be doing?" Which isn't the same as looking for the next thing.²³

Consultations of the kind described in (b) and in this section often overlapped or flowed in and out of each other. The analytical and technical work study element in vocational consultancy means that, whilst it is akin and complementary to vocational counselling and spiritual direction and appraisal, it differs significantly from them.

Consultancies which span both work and vocation have proved to be rich in potential. There can be creative interaction between consultations about work and vocation.²⁴ Helping consultors to analyse and design their work enables consultants to get to know them as workers, reflective practitioners, and gives them insights into their sense of vocation. This informs in a profound manner consultations about their vocation and its development. In turn, consultations about vocations inform subsequent consultations about specific aspects of their work, consultors themselves and experiences of pursuing their vocation.

(d) *Long Term Evaluation, Study and Research*

Consultations about long term evaluation, study and research were other ways in which consultancy services were used. This aspect can be closely associated with vocational review. From time to time practitioners felt the need to do more study or acquire more skills. When they felt like this they were generally open to help in working hard at what they needed to study and research and what skills they needed to acquire in order to do the work better, make themselves into more effective practitioners and equip themselves more fully for their vocation in the present and the future. A way of helping them to do this was through assisting them to formulate their own "study, training and research proposals". (cf Display 8:3) Another way was through helping practitioners to plan, evaluate and write up their sabbaticals. Yet another way was through consultations about proposals for and the conduct of action research projects, sometimes for further degrees. This is complementary to the job of a research supervisor and not to be confused with it. I have experienced this as a consultor and as a consultant.²⁵ Doing these things meant practitioners/consultors were taking charge of their own developmental programme. Consultors valued what emerged and the processes by which they themselves could do this periodically for themselves and with others.

(e) *The Non-directive Approach*

Through consultations, consultors had personal experience of the non-directive approach, often for the first time. Generally speaking it was accepted and valued,

not least because consultants got help through its use that they had not got through directive and advice giving approaches. Periodically this approach was discussed in relation to the consultancy process. But it was in considering the consultancy subject matter that consultants and consultants had to grapple with it because designing projects and work programmes involved deciding what directive and non-directive action the consultant should take, with whom, in what way. As most consultants had more experience of acting directly or permissively than non-directively, they were in especial need of help with the praxis of the non-directive approach. Interestingly, in considering just what action to take in specific situations the terms were not usually used. Invariably the kind of action to be taken was described and discussed in ordinary language as were the ways and means of taking it rather than in technical terms which described its form and nature. Consultants were inclined to talk about taking directive and non-directive action when they first got hold of the ideas. This was not encouraged and soon wore off. The terms got in the way and clouded the issues not least because they obscured the subtle nuances of the way in which particular people in specific situations should be or not be approached, directly or non-directively. Concentrating on details of the appropriate action and ways of taking it, took consultants and consultants deep into the differences between the approaches and the various combinations of doing things *with* and *for* people and leaving them to do things *for themselves* (cf pp 315-316). Nevertheless, whether defined as such or not, non-directivity was a common denominator to all the subject matter. Its neglect was an invariable cause of the difficulties that led consultants to seek consultancy help. And it was invariably a key feature of future action.

3. Things Valued

Drawing upon the consultancy experiences described above and my memory of them, the top ten things that were valued by consultants can be summarised as follows.

- Consultants valued opportunities to explore their work in the strictest confidence with people who had no power over them and no ulterior motives regarding the outcome.
- Consultants valued consultants taking them and their work very seriously and giving them undivided attention and the quality time required to do so. Frequently consultants were surprised and moved by the experience of a consultant or a group of co-consultants concentrating exclusively for an hour and a quarter on them and their work. Leslie Griffiths, reflecting in 1995 on co-consultancy sessions he had on a course in 1977 when he was preparing for a second period as a missionary in Haiti, said:

Certainly nobody had listened to me for that long ever about my work. And that is a great sign of our poverty when you realise that we don't have time to think about our work in the way that the course made us think about it. We are more and more conscious of interpersonal listening at the level of counselling and therapy and all that kind of stuff. But we don't apply those skills or those insights to the work we do.²⁶

With the growth of consultancy services and assessment schemes such experiences would not now be quite as novel, but they are still highly valued.

- Consultants valued gaining information and insights which helped them to understand themselves as workers and their work better and therefore to engage more critically and creatively with:
 - themselves as practitioners
 - their vocation
 - their situations and churches
 - their socio-religious contexts
 - climates of thought
 - decision making and taking.
- Consultants valued a model of leadership which integrated directive and non-directive approaches.
- Consultants valued the emphasis upon and the discovery of things, always practicable and often simple, that they themselves could do and needed to do to:
 - develop their ability
 - improve their performance
 - be more effective
 - experience greater job satisfaction
 - help others to do the same.
- Consultants valued conceptual re-modelling and re-shaping in ways which helped them to see more clearly the essential design of projects, programmes and the various religious entities with which they were engaged (churches, organizations, communities, etc). This was all part of what was described earlier as "cutting the work diamond" (see pp 295-296).
- Consultants valued consultations because they were encounters with the theory and theology as well as with practice and existential realities of church and community work and of consultancy. Opportunities for interaction between their theory and theology and those of consultants were greatly appreciated. Many were looking for a rationale which gave coherence to an eclectic collection of approaches, methods and practices which they used. Some found it through consultations about their approaches. Others found it in the *avec* approach. They said that it was precisely what they had been reaching out for and that they had been intuitively practising it in one way or another but, because they had not got a sufficiently clear conceptual and theoretical base for what they were doing, their efforts were not as effective and conceptually satisfying as they might otherwise have been.²⁷
- Consultants valued the ways in which technical help went together with moral, pastoral and spiritual support and they appreciated the way in which they were offered through warm relationships by people who were genuinely interested in them and believed in them and their work.
- Consultants who participated in co-consultancy sessions valued learning about the experiences of other practitioners and studying their work. Two benefits were regularly acknowledged. The first was the realisation that other people had

similar problems. This they found reassuring not least because it broke down the sense of isolation felt through struggling on their own with difficulties they felt were peculiarly their own. The second was that frequently they saw things about themselves and their situation through entering into the experience of others that they had not seen through concentrating on themselves and their situations: that is they had experiences of a kind of lateral disclosure or revelation.

- Consultants valued the momentum in consultations which helped them to make progress from a "stress-work-mode" to a "well-being-in-flow-mode" with all that meant for changes in attitude, mood and creativity (cf pp 344 and reference 6). This momentum was variously generated by one or other of the other nine factors noted above or different combinations of them.
- Consultants valued being treated in an adult way, as normal, healthy practitioners in need of work consultancy help and not as patients in need of counselling.

II CONSULTATIONS WITH T. R. BATTEN, 1974 TO 1991

Throughout the time that Avec was offering the work consultancy courses and services described in this chapter, the two full-time staff members, Catherine Widdicombe and myself received consultancy help from the late Dr. T. R. Batten. Separately we had attended courses run by the Battens in 1967 and 1970. T. R. Batten supervised our research for further degrees and was the consultant to Project 70-75 from 1969 to 1976. His consultancy to Avec started in 1974 and concluded in 1991. For a few years afterwards both of us had consultations with him. Detailed notes were kept of all these consultations. An analysis of them reveals the kind of consultancy help and supervision we required to make our best contribution towards developing and running a consultancy agency and the provision of consultancy services. We determined the initial and presenting agenda for the consultations. During the consultations other subjects emerged as being important. The subject matter of these consultations covered the following topics.

1. The founding, organization, development and funding of Avec

At various times there were consultations about: the structure and status of the organization, working relationships between full-time, part-time and associate staff members and trustees; external working relationships with churches and agencies; management; funding; promoting the agency and its work; becoming an affiliated unit of Roehampton Institute of Higher Education.

2. Shaping the Avec work programme

This aspect of the of the consultancy included: allocation of staff time to courses and consultancy sessions, preparation, study, research and administration; how to start a programme; confidentiality; areas of work: design and structure of courses and programmes; working in selected areas; in-house in-service training of staff and associates; promotion and recruitment; designing and developing a two-year diploma; periodic reviews and evaluations of Avec and its work.

3. Consultancy, project and field work

This covered a large number of consultancy commissions with The Young Women's Christian Association; an ecumenical body in Northern Ireland; a project with the Methodist Church in Rhodesia at the point where the country became Zimbabwe; a development programme in the Anglican Diocese of Sheffield; and many more.

4. Staff members

This aspect variously involved: recruiting and deploying staff; working relationships between staff members; the development of their skills and extension of their experience and their abilities to conduct courses; their studies, research and writing programmes; sabbaticals.²⁸

Subjects from these four areas were interwoven. A consultation, normally three and a half hours, would cover three or four main topics. Some emphases can be discerned in this overall pattern. From 1974-76 consultations were predominantly about implementing the findings of the action research programme Project 70-75 and the ideas which eventually led to the formation of Avec. During the next three years consultations concentrated on designing, shaping and organizing the training and consultancy programme. From 1979 to the late 1980s, when the formal consultancy arrangement with Batten was beginning to tail off due to his age, the consultations were equally about the work programme, the future of Avec and researching the work and writing it up.

Catherine Widdicombe and I valued consultations with T. R. Batten for many reasons. At a practical level he always made himself available when needed, even at short notice. He gave himself completely to the discussions, his powers of concentration even in his eighties were phenomenal, almost total. He always helped us to see things more clearly and opened up possibilities we had not identified. Subjectively he was totally for us and unstintingly gave us personal and moral support as well as technical and academic help. At the same time he always saw points of view of others and enabled us to face up to them even when it was painful to do so. More objectively Batten helped us to:

- create, maintain, establish, monitor and develop Avec as a viable autonomous service agency;
- design, re-design and adapt the overall work programme in relation to developments that occurred and the changing pattern of needs;
- implement the work programme which involved, inter-alia;
 - designing, planning, carrying out and evaluating courses, consultancy and project work
 - learning how to do the work and training others to do it
 - staffing courses and projects
 - recruiting for courses
 - identifying crucial issues and key subject matter;
- develop creative working relationships throughout the Agency and between Avec and supporting organizations and clients;
- engage in long-term staff preparation, training and education;

- write things up;
- research Avec and its work;
- develop as practitioners, consultors, consultants and as people.

III LIMITATIONS, FRUSTRATIONS AND DANGERS

Human and spiritual inscrutability and unpredictability impose limitations upon work analysis and consultancy as they do with all attempts at thoughtful action with people. Work analysis and consultancy are not exact sciences. Many things consultors and consultants would like to know are simply unknown or unknowable. Consultors and consultants can deceive themselves and each other. Not all problems can be solved. Analyses and designs are never perfect, generally they are good enough. Forgotten or ignored these limitations undermine analytical and consultancy processes; understood, remembered, respected and accepted they become challenging and intriguing aspects of the processes. Taking them into account and treating them as existential friends stretches the mind, wit, imagination and the intuitive senses of consultors and consultants alike as they grapple with human and spiritual realities. To dream, design and plan to influence the unknown future purposefully calls for faith and insight as well as logic and knowledge. These activities also call for candour about the status of the outcome of the processes. And that requires intellectual and spiritual honesty, humility and courage.

The limitations indicated are part of the nature of things. Alongside them are the limitations inherent in the capacities and capabilities of the participants and their fallibility. The boundaries of these limitations are traced out by the abilities consultors and consultants have or lack. The limitations in the nature of things and those in the capabilities of the participants interact dialectically. Sometimes this interaction is creative, at others it is not. Differentiating the two sources makes for positive interaction, confusing them confounds them.

Other limitations are to be found in the ever present danger of the abuse and misuse of consultancy relationships and processes. These possibilities are considered in pp 203-205. Yet another form of limitation can be experienced when, during the time between consultations and the consultors taking action, situations so change that analyses are invalid and plans inappropriate. This does not mean the work done is necessarily wasted but it does mean things have to be re-worked, often on the spot, prior to action. This is discussed earlier, see pp 205-207. Many of these dangers and limitations have been examined in some detail in Chapters Two and Five.

Clearly, whilst there are very definite limits to and hazards in consultancy processes and to what any person can do to help others to think things through, considerable benefits can accrue to consultors and their work through good consultancy relationships and practice. Sadly, all too often and sometimes tragically, practitioners experiencing work stress who need technical help are referred for counselling when they need consultancy, a more appropriate and safer first port of call.

NOTES AND REFERENCES: Chapter Nine

1. See Lovell, George (1996) *Avec: Agency and Approach* (An Avec Publication) and *Viva L'Avec, A Service Agency for Church and Community Work: An Evaluation on Avec's Training (and Consultancy) Ministry* by MARC Europe (A MARC Europe Report, 1991) pp 237. A series of in-depth interviews followed up this survey. They were published in *Telling Experiences*. Three Avec internal reports give useful information about consultancy needs: *Religious Orders and the Need for Work Consultancy: A report of a seminar in January 1985* at which some thirty religious from men's and women's orders carefully considered eight year's experience of Avec staff working with 330 religious of 50 orders. *Consultants and Facilitators for Religious: A Report of a consultation organised jointly by the CMRS and Avec on 26th and 27th November 1991*; *Facilitator's Conference: Ireland 8th and 9th September, 1992*.
2. Full details are given in *Avec: Agency and Approach*, pp 62-73 and 155-157.
3. *op cit*.
4. *cf op cit* p 19f.
5. *cf op cit* pp 144f and 147 respectively from which these graphs have been extracted.
6. Stamp, Gillian (September 1988) *Well-Being and Stress at Work* (Brunel Institute of Organisation and Social Studies, BIOSS) p 3. Quotations from this paper help to contextualise her thinking:
In the course of the past fifteen years I have had the privilege of listening to more than a thousand men and women, of different ages and levels of education in different countries, from different cultures and at all levels of capability, as they talked to me in depth about their working lives. They were employed by, or belonged to, a wide variety of commercial, military, religious, educational and voluntary organisations. This rich and diverse experience has given me a unique opportunity to learn about well-being and stress at work, both from the point of view of the individual and of the organisation (p 1).
More tends to be written about the experience and consequences of stress than about well-being. In the course of my interviews I have had the opportunity to hear much of both, and my findings echo those of others who have set out to understand the psychologically healthy individual. Our shared conclusion is (a) that well-being occurs when what there is to do is in balance with what the person feels able to do, and (b) that continuing personal development happens only when what the person feels able to do is matched by growth in what there is to do (p 3).
A word that is very widely used to describe the state of well-being is "flow". People in flow feel alert, energetic, motivated, competent and creative . . . (p 6) (people in stress) are tired rather than alert, dull rather than creative, prone to poor judgements which deplete self-confidence and increase self-consciousness, ill at ease with the work as it progresses, constantly questioning self and others as the work proceeds (p 7).
7. MARC Europe in their report of their survey of Avec's consultancy and project work said that the main effect of courses and consultations on respondents was to give them more confidence. This greater confidence, the survey shows, came through improving their ability to lead, to work with groups and to plan and evaluate purposefully thus helping to find ways by which they themselves could do things. *op cit* p 4 section 5.5, pp 97ff.
8. A summary and analysis of the survey by Peter Brierly is given in *Avec: Agency and Approach* pp 158-171.
9. *op cit* p 160.
10. *op cit* p 165.
11. *cf* Russell, Peter W and Lovell, George (1988) *Furlough Work Study* (An Avec Internal Paper) p 31.
12. These are to be housed at Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford.
13. This is described in detail in Lovell, George (1994) *Analysis and Design* (Burns & Oates) pp 93-106.
14. This is described in detail in an article by Leslie Griffiths, "Relationships in Mission" in *Epworth Review* (Vol 15. No 2 May 1988) pp 85-94.

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15. cf Lovell, George (1994) *Analysis and Design* pp 253-259.
16. cf *op cit* pp 255ff.
17. The Uniting Church of Australia has an excellent model for making decisions by consensus. The flow chart they have produced has slip roads which enable groups to take other routes when they fail to reach a consensus. When all other possibilities fail they lead to "decision by a formal majority", cf *A Manual for Meetings in the Uniting Church* (Uniting Church of Australia, 1994).
18. On this subject see: Chapter 6, "A Model of Event Management" in Smith, Peter, B. and Peterson, Mark, E. (1988) *Leadership, Organizations and Culture* (Sage Publications) pp 79-93.
19. cf *Furlough Work Study* referred to in ref 11, pp 11ff.
20. cf *Avec: Agency and Approach* pp 168ff.
21. Catherine Widdicombe has made a detailed study of this transition: see *Small Communities in Religious Life: making them work* (The Lutterworth Press, 2000).
22. cf *Furlough Work Study* pp 14f.
23. Lovell, George (ed) (1996 *Telling Experiences: Stories About a Transforming Way of Working with People* (Chester House Publication) p 159f.
24. There are examples of this in *Telling Experiences* cf Charles New's story pp 29ff, and Howard Mellor's p 52.
25. cf Lovell, George and Widdicombe, Catherine (1978) *Churches and Communities: An Approach to Development in the Local Church* (Search Press) pp 209ff and *Avec: Agency and Approach* p 77.
26. *Telling Experiences* p 19.
27. *Avec: Agency and Approach* p 37.
28. What this involved is discussed in *Avec: Agency and Approach* pp 62-73.