Work Orientations and Responses to Career Choices – Indian Regional Survey (WORCC-IRS)

Draft Report
for discussion at the
National Consultation on Career Psychology (NCCP)
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PART 1

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This project has been a tremendous effort and it is our sincere hope that WORCC-IRS and NCCP will make an important contribution to the potential realization of the young people of our country.

Gideon Arulmani
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(Research Partner)

Date:	25th December 2005.
Location:	Bangalore, India.

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Chapter 1

<u>Background</u>

1. Introduction

1.1. Career counselling and the Indian context

The young person's transition into the world of work marks one of the most important milestones in his or her life. Reaching and crossing this milestone is influenced by numerous socioeconomic, cultural and psychological forces. In some families it is the culmination of a process of being prepared and educated, allowing the young person to make this transition from a position of strength. In other families socioeconomic forces forestall such preparatory efforts and the young person may have to enter the world of work from a position of disadvantage.

Presently the term 'career' is often related to something that only the 'rich' can afford and is sometimes dismissed as being irrelevant to the needs of those who are disadvantaged and living in poverty. It is essential that *c*areer counselling is defined within the multiple realities and paradoxes that compose the Indian situation. When understood to mean livelihood or occupation or vocation or in its most simple sense: *a suitable job*, its crosscutting relevance to all sections of a population become immediately evident. From this broader perspective, career counselling could serve as a tool to support young people, irrespective of their backgrounds, to choose and plan effectively for a successful career.

The relevance of career counseling to the Indian context becomes sharper against the background of economic reforms that have helped India become one of the world's fastest growing economies. An obvious corollary to economic development is the widening of the array of occupational possibilities. The optimal utilisation of human resource to fulfil the demands of these occupational roles becomes vital to sustain growth and development. It could become difficult for young people to understand and navigate a personal pathway through this new and perhaps unfamiliar array of work options. It is at this point that career counselling becomes crucial to long term progress.

Formal vocational guidance services have been described to be a part of economic development, where the division of labour that follows industrialisation eventually extends to a point where traditional mechanisms of role allocation start to break down and formal guidance services are required to supplement them (Watts, 1996). Vocational Guidance and Career Counselling in India are currently at this stage of development. Guidance and counselling that would facilitate effective career decision-making therefore assume a special urgency in the Indian situation.

1.2. Methods and systems that facilitate career choice

Individuals repeatedly encounter crossroads along their journey toward and within the world of work. Early along this journey, the questions surrounding *entry* into this world may be the most pressing. Further ahead on this journey, issues pertaining to *progressing* within this world could emerge. Specialisation, making career changes, exiting from a certain career path, recovering from unemployment, retraining are all realities that the modern worker could encounter. It is in response to the individual's need for skills and support to steer through these career crossroads that specialised forms of counselling emerged. Vocational Guidance, Career Counselling and Career Psychology are three facets of this field of knowledge.

Career Psychology has emerged today as a distinct branch of behavioural science. It is multidisciplinary in character and draws from a variety of disciplines such as Counselling Psychology, Educational Theory, Economics and Sociology. In effect Career Psychology provides the theoretical and research basis for the practice of Vocational Guidance and Career Counselling.

2.   Why career counselling?

2.1. Capitalising on suitability

In the absence of effective systems for career counselling, the career decision-making process could continue to be influenced by the various psycho-social, educational and socio-economic factors that may not lead to effective choices. Typically, the young career aspirant in India makes choices based on hearsay, prevailing career beliefs and prestige variables pertaining to specific careers. Students who have gone through comprehensive career counselling are far more discerning in their career choices. It is well known that individuals who make career choices based on personal interests and abilities show significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and are more productive workers. Students who make career choices without adequate and accurate counselling and guidance, are at risk to being impelled to choose careers that are popular – forsaking careers for which they might have a higher suitability.

2.2. Reducing career development lag

A career development lag is a delay between qualifying for a career and actually entering a career. Our observations (Arulmani, 1995, 1998, 2000; Nag-Arulmani, 2004) have indicated that the longest lag periods are associated with poor career planning. Career development can last a lifetime. When this process allows movement from one effective choice to another, benefits accrue and resources are conserved. When it becomes a blundering from one ineffective decision to another, career development can become costly both to the individual and the nation. This is one of the factors that keeps the basket of the educated unemployed brimming and full, in India.

2.3. *Capitalising on emerging opportunities:*

India is a developing country. New occupational opportunities are constantly emerging. Mindsets that place occupations on a prestige hierarchy quite often prevent young career aspirants from actualising their talents for emerging careers. Our earlier work has shown that a large number of Indian career choosers are typically restricted in the range of careers they are willing to consider. India today however presents a rapidly increasing range of employment opportunities. The benefits of this development are more likely to accrue to those who approach the employment market place with an attitude that is unencumbered by limiting social conventions. It is at this intersection between the individual and the emerging world of work that career counselling can play a crucial role.

3.   The relevance of the present project

3.1. *Paucity of research*

The importance of career counselling has been emphasised in India from as early as 1938 when the Acharya Narendra Dev Committee underlined the importance of guidance in education. Various committees and commissions (e.g. The Mudaliar Commission, 1952; the Kothari Education Commission, 1964-66) have subsequently made recommendations for the formalisation of guidance and counselling services at a national level.

The tremendous changes in the world of work, place a high degree of pressure on the Indian young person to make effective career choices. The earliest recommendations for the development of formal career guidance services in India were made almost five decades ago (Barnette, 1954). Yet, Career Psychology has remained an infant science in India. Theoretically sound, culturally and psychologically validated, career counselling services do not yet seem to be available for large scale use in the Indian situation.

3.2. *Relevance, reliability and validity*

It is important when considering career counselling for the Indian context, that we keep in mind the historical differences between Western and Indian approaches to work. Vocational Guidance first emerged as a strongly felt need from within an industrial, mechanised and individualistic work culture. Although 'career' has become an integral aspect of modern Indian culture, career choice and development progresses in India in a manner that is quite different from the West. It is essential that these differences are taken into account for the development of a reliable and valid method of guidance and counselling for Indian young people.

4.   Project methodology

The development of Career Psychology in India is poised at a point when work and career are moving into a new phase in their evolution. India is today described to be a developing nation and opportunities in the world of work are immense. Effective guidance and counselling could play a vital role in drawing the young person and the worker closer to these opportunities.

It is against this background of a paucity of research into the field of Career Psychology, coupled with a pressing demand for career counselling services, that this project has been conceived and executed in partnership with the Sir. Ratan Tata Trust. We have approached this project at two levels briefly described below:

4.1. Work Orientations and Responses to Career Choices – Indian Regional Survey (WORCC-IRS)

WORCC-IRS is a survey conducted in 15 different regions of the country on a sample of high school, higher secondary and vocational (ITI and polytechnic) students. A small sample of working youth and those in informal training programmes is also included.

The survey has been conducted in 8 different languages and is designed to collect information about young people's orientations to work and livelihood and the manner in which they make career / vocational choices in these different regions.

The WORCC-IRS data has been analysed within a framework of 6 interrelated themes. These findings have been collated into the present *Draft Report*.

4.2. The National Consultation on Career Psychology (NCCP)

In its contemporary forms career counselling draws upon a number of disciplines: *psychology, education, sociology and labour economics*. It is our objective therefore to approach this important issue from an interdisciplinary point of view. The format for the NCCP therefore is to present the findings of the WORCC-IRS to scholars, government officials, NGOs, international agencies, school boards, principals, counsellors and others for discussion and interpretation into the larger context of the Indian situation. These interactions would be documented and collated into a *Final Report* for wider circulation and publication.

4.3. Anticipated outcomes

It is expected that the WORCC-IRS and NCCP together would contribute to the following:

- Develop guidelines for the delivery of career and vocational counselling services.
- Address issues of capacity building for the appropriate delivery of these services.
- Develop guidelines for a curriculum framework for Career Psychology that could be offered as a systematic, culturally validated course for counsellors in India.
- Consider policy recommendations for the systematisation of a national careers service.

It is anticipated that this interdisciplinary consultation would lead to a better understanding of Indian young people's orientations to work and lay the foundations for a service that would help them make effective transitions into the world of work.
The next chapter provides an overview of the conceptual and theoretical foundations upon which the rationale for the WORCC-IRS project rests.

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Chapter 2

<u>Rationale</u>

Three important theoretical constructs have influenced contemporary trends in Career Psychology. The chapter begins with a brief description of these approaches followed by a discussion of the key constructs that compose the rationale for the study.

1. The developmental and life-span oriented approaches

1.1. Stages and developmental tasks

The concept of human development is one that has been central to theory development and practice in Career Psychology. Career Developmental Theory, puts forth the idea that occupational development keeps pace with the individual's cognitive maturation (Ginzberg, Ginzburg, Axelrod and Herma, 1951; Super, 1957). Career development is said to occur in *stages*. As with other aspects of human development, each of these stages present *career development tasks*, the successful resolution of which is critical to the passage into and comfort in the next stage of career development. An integral aspect of this conceptualisation of career development is the concept of *career maturity* which reflects the individual's level of career progress in relation to his or her career-related development tasks.

The framework offered by the developmental perspective where 'readiness' is juxtaposed against 'tasks', is useful and relevant across different cultures. It is at the next step, namely, the proposition that career development keeps pace with cognitive maturation that a departure is in evidence in the Indian context. As we will see in later chapters, a variety of non-normative factors such as contextual realities, economic cycles, educational systems, socio-economic status and social-cognitive environments play a significant role in altering the trajectory of career development.

1.2. Trait and factor theory

Embedded within the developmental formulation is the important construct of personal traits. In psychological terms, a trait is a theoretical construct that describes an underlying constituent of the individual's personality, which explains the consistent and cohesive manner in which a person behaves. Interests and aptitudes are two specific constructs that are emphasised and the assessment of interests and aptitudes continue to remain an important pillar on which career counselling rests.

1.3 Circumscription and compromise

One conception of career development sees a gradual narrowing down of occupational possibilities according to emerging self-concepts (Gottfredson, 1981). *Circumscription* involves the inclusion and elimination of occupational alternatives through an age graded

developmental sequence. *Compromise* is a process of closing the gap between the ideal and the reality in the world of work.

2. Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive model of psycho-social behaviour analyses the diverse ways in which beliefs of personal efficacy operate within a network of socio-cultural and socio-economic influences, to shape life paths. The central theme is that people's belief in their personal efficacy to manage life's demands affects their psychological well-being, their accomplishments and the direction their lives take. Bandura describes three social cognitive mechanisms:

2.1. Self-efficacy beliefs

Bandura (1977a) defines self-efficacy expectations as beliefs about one's own ability to be successful in the performance of a task. The concept of self-efficacy rests on the premise that self-referent thought influences human behaviour. Bandura has been able to demonstrate that self-efficacy cognitions determine whether behaviour will be initiated, how much energy will be expended and the duration of the maintenance of this behaviour in the face of obstacles and adverse experiences.

Bandura (1986) describes four main sources of influence that contribute to the formation of self-efficacy beliefs:

A. Performance accomplishments

Performance Accomplishments describe the individual's actual performance on a task and his or her ability to attribute success on the task to personal effort. Repeated failure on a career development task is likely to affect the career aspirant's self-efficacy for career preparation.

B. Vicarious experience

Going through the experience of watching someone (a role model) similar to themselves succeed by consistent effort raises observers' belief that they too can master similar activities. In the same way, observations of others' failures despite strong efforts, undermines observers' judgement of their own efficacy and lowers motivational levels. A young person who is surrounded by role models who have succeeded in career preparation is likely to have a higher self-efficacy for career preparation.

C. Verbal Persuasion

Verbal persuasion refers to the individual being persuaded and encouraged by someone else that they possess the capabilities to master a task. Conversely, consistent verbal feedback that questions a person's capabilities would cause him or her to avoid challenging activities and give up quickly in the face of adversity. Being consistently discouraged from going on for further education by family and community, could lessen the career aspirant's self-efficacy for career preparation through further education.

D. Physiological and emotional arousal

People partly rely on their physiological capabilities and emotional states, to assess their own capabilities and personal stress reactions tend to be interpreted as the precursor to poor performance (Bandura, 1995). If career preparation tasks consistently evoke feelings of fear and frustration the individual's self-efficacy for that task could diminish.

According to Social Cognitive Theory, these factors work together to influence the individual's over all self-efficacy for a particular task.

2.2. Outcome expectations

The second socio-cognitive mechanism that Bandura describes, namely, outcome expectations are the person's imagined consequences of performing particular behaviours and the value people place on the outcomes of their actions. An outcome expectation is a person's estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes. If the imagined consequence of taking up an Arts course is unemployment, while the Science courses are expected to lead to 'good' careers the individual is more likely to be predisposed toward Science courses.

2.3. Goal setting and planning

This is the third social cognitive mechanism described by Social Cognitive Theory. A goal may be defined as the determination to engage in a particular activity or to effect a particular future outcome (Bandura, 1995). Goals operate principally through people's capacity to symbolically represent future outcomes and to react self-evaluatively to their own behaviour, based on internal standards of performance.

3. Social Learning Theory of career development

3.1. Habitual ways of thinking

According to John Krumboltz (1979), the experiences that an individual has, lead this person to develop a picture of him or herself – a *self-view* which reflect the person's interests, personal values and confidence in performing specific tasks related to career preparation. In addition to the formation of a view of self, the individual also forms a particular view of the environment. That vocational courses are only for the poor is an example of a commonly held *world view generalisation* among career aspirants in India. Such generalisations guide the individual's career decision-making.

Habitual ways of thinking begin to characterise the individual's orientation to the world of work. These interpretations influence the development of skills with which an individual deals with career development tasks. A young girl who believes for example that her socio-economic status renders her helpless to overcome obstacles is likely, when difficulties emerge, to give up without approaching the task that is before her.

3.2. Career Beliefs

Drawing from the Social Cognitive and Social Learning theories, we have made the observation that a conglomerate of attitudes, opinions, convictions and notions seem to cohere together to create mindsets and beliefs that underlie people's orientation to the idea of a career. We have referred to these deeply held convictions about activities linked to career development as *career beliefs*. It appeared from our field experiences that the impact of career beliefs on the career development process within the Indian situation was marked and critical (Arulmani, 1998, 1999, 2000; Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004). In fact we found that the outcomes of career counselling were often rendered meaningless when they were not consistent with prevailing career beliefs.

4. Key constructs underpinning the WORCC-IRS

4.1. Social cognitive-environments

As with other human activities work occurs within a social context – a context characterised by patterns of beliefs and ways of thinking. This influence of the mind on behaviour is particularly significant when entire societies begin to think in a particular manner, internalise belief structures and demonstrate certain mindsets. Psychologists use the term *social cognitions* to describe patterns of thinking that have become habitual across social groups (Bandura, 1989). Social cognitions are patterns of beliefs that exist within a community and guide the behaviour of the individuals in that community. Arbib and Hesse (1986) point out that beliefs held by the individuals of a community may cohere into a pattern of *commonly held* cognitions characterising an entire community or social group. These belief structures may not be internalised within the minds of single individuals but rather in the relational processes of social exchanges.

Social cognitions seem to play a powerful and significant role in the evolution of work as well. Mindsets engendered by social and moral frames of reference give a particular colouring and interpretation to the meaning and purpose of work. Prevailing ideologies and the experiences of a community create *social-cognitive environments*. Within these environments, positive or negative values could be attributed to work in general as well as toward occupational clusters. These social-cognitive environments foster the evolution of a *work ethic*: a set of social norms that describe a particular approach to work. For example a certain work ethic may place a positive moral value on hard work based on the belief that work has innate value and must be pursued for its own sake. Similarly another social-cognitive environment may promote a work ethic wherein aspiring to high prestige careers maybe looked upon with scepticism. A work ethic is a collection of social cognitions about work, which then guide and influence people's work behaviour.

Cognitions and beliefs arise from a reciprocal interaction between the individual and his or her environment. Career planning in India, is not a purely individualistic effort and beliefs and values held by the community could play a significant role in the career decision-making process. Beliefs pertaining to career choice and planning could be

affected by the attitudes of the young person's family and community to further education, job acquisition and to the future as a whole.

It is likely that career development is not merely a function of the maturation and the unfolding of personal interests and aptitudes or the crystallisation of personal identities. Personal attributes unfold within a certain social-cognitive environment. The characteristics of this environment influence the manner in which personal attributes are linked to career development.

It seems therefore that the nature of a social-cognitive environment plays a defining role in career development. Based on this argument, social-cognitions and social cognitive environments have been taken as core variables for examination by the present study.

The literature, as well as our earlier research, points to the following variables as perhaps describing a social-cognitive environment:

A.   *Career Beliefs* as characterised by habitual ways of thinking about work and orientation to career development.

B.   *Goal setting and planning* as characterised by the nature of occupational aspirations and efforts directed toward setting career development targets.

D.   *Decision-making styles* against the continuum of collectivism-individualism.

E.   *Community influences* as characterised by the nature and extent of parent involvement,   pressure to make career choices, access to role models and community support.

4.2. Self efficacy for career preparation

Self-efficacy is the confidence in the personal ability to be successful in the performance of a task. The career development task confronting the Indian high school student is decision making regarding what he or she is going to do after high school. Behavioural outcomes at this stage in the career development process points to three possibilities:

- preparing for a future career by pursuing further education
- discontinuing education to seek employment
- remaining unoccupied

WORCC-IRS has two additional objectives, which this Draft Report has not commented on. These are:

- to explore how an individual's self efficacy mediates career development
- the nature of career development tasks in the Indian context and the place that career maturity has in the career decision making process within the Indian education system.

Analysis of these issues from the WORCC-IRS dataset will be presented in the final report.

5. Propositions and research questions

WORCC-IRS is an exploratory study. A post hoc approach has been taken to explore the data. However some of the relationships that we set out to look for are as follows:

5.1. Proposition 1: Types of social-cognitive environments

A social-cognitive environment by its very nature would vary in character across different social groups. It seems possible therefore that a typology of social-cognitive environments could exist and that these environments could be grouped into families according to the manner in which career beliefs, outcome expectations, goal setting, decision-making styles, and community influences manifest themselves. Preliminary analysis of this construct is presented in this Draft Report.

5.2. Proposition 2: Development of career preparation self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is said to be formed by clearly definable 'sources' located within the individual's environment (Bandura 1986). It is possible therefore that different social-cognitive environments impact the development of self-efficacy in different ways. Preliminary analysis of this construct this presented in is Draft Report.

5.3. Proposition 3: Orientations to career paths

Three kinds of orientations to the future that emerge at the end of high school, are work immediately, pursue part time work and study, and pursue further education. It is possible that the nature of the social-cognitive environments and the quality of career preparation self-efficacy influence these orientations. Preliminary analysis on orientations to career paths is presented in this Draft Report.

5.4. Proposition 4: Impact of career beliefs on career preparation

Our observations point to the possibility that social cognitive variables in the form of career beliefs influence the career decision-making process. It is likely that some of these career beliefs are *common* across communities and SES groups while other belief themes would differ *between* communities and SES groups. Preliminary analysis about career beliefs is presented in this Draft Report.

This is the theoretical and conceptual background that has guided the design of the WORCC-IRS project. Admittedly, these theories are Western in their origin. Rather than dismiss all western models as unsuitable, we have attempted to explore the extent to which existing theoretical frameworks could be *adapted* to the Indian situation and the eveloping world. It is our hope that the WORCC-IRS and the National Consultation on Careers Psychology (NCCP) would lay the foundations for theory development and model building in the area of career counselling for the Indian context.

Chapter: 3

The Research Design: A Summary

The Promise Foundation worked under the guidance of an Advisory Committee and in partnership with a team of Research Partners to design and execute the WORCC-IRS. Given the wide scope of the study and the multiple disciplines that it would draw from, advisors represented a variety of disciplines including psychology, psychiatry, education, statistics, anthropology and sociology. Research Partners were drawn from different regions, to allow access to samples in different parts of the country. Further details about the Advisory Committee and the Research Partners are provided in Appendices 1 & 2.

A detailed Research Design (WORCC-IRS: Research Design, 2005, TPF) was developed in consultation with the Advisory Committee and the team of Research Partners was trained to execute the study as per this design. The key points of the methodology and design are presented in this chapter.

1. Collation of Indian research on Career Psychology

A literature search was undertaken to develop an overview of Indian research in the field. The titles of a total of 229 journal articles, doctoral dissertations, books, monographs, Government documents, newspaper articles that seemed to have addressed the issue of career choice were identified. Attempts were made to contact each of the individuals / teams that produced these writings. Abstracts and where possible the complete articles were obtained from those who responded.

The review indicated that the salient research themes were as follows:

- Socioeconomic status and career choice.
- Gender and career choice.
- Personal identity and career choice.
- Career maturity.

Information gleaned from these studies helped in formulating the design for the WORCC-IRS. However, barring a few, most of this research was atheoretical and did not reflect contemporary trends in Career Psychology. Details of the sources reviewed are provided in Appendix 2.

2. Formation of a core group of Research Partners

Based on relationships that developed during the literature survey and The Promise Foundation's national network of honorary youth workers, a core team of Research Partners was formed. Selection was based on the following criteria:

- Fluency in English and local language, with past experience in English to local language translation.
- Access to the sample under consideration with specific emphasis on exposure to student welfare work and interest or past experience in career counselling.
- Willingness to undergo an orientation to Career Psychology and be trained in the research methodology.

The survey was conducted in districts that the Research Partners had access to. Details of the survey locations are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: WORCC-IRS Locations and languages

District	State	Language
Bangalore	Karnataka	Kannada and English
Chandigarh	Chandigarh	Hindi and English
Chennai	Tamil Nadu	Tamil and English
Dhule	Maharashtra	Marathi
Dehradoon	Uttaranchal	Hindi and English
Guwahati	Assam	Assamese and English
Nagercoil	Tamil Nadu	Tamil and English
New Delhi	New Delhi	Hindi and English
Rampur	Himachal Pradesh	Hindi and English
Shimoga	Karnataka	Kannada and English
South Goa	Goa	English
Srinagar	Jammu and Kashmir	Urdu and English
Ukhrul	Manipur	English

3. The survey protocol

3.1. Identification of themes

Ten themes were identified as being relevant to understanding career development in the Indian context based on The Promise Foundation's past experience in the field, and a comprehensive review of Indian and international literature.

The WORCC-IRS protocol is composed of ten sections as follows:

Section 1:   Personal details, socio-demographic and socio-economic information.
Section 2:   Orientation to work, career and subject choice.
Section 3:   Career interests, occupational prestige and parental attitudes toward career choices.

Section 4:   Career decision-making difficulties.
Section 5:   Social-cognitions and career beliefs.
Section 6:   Perception of career barriers and the confidence to ovecome these barriers.
Section 7:   The influence of individualistic vs. collectivistic orientations on career choice.
Section 8:   Sources of self-efficacy in the form of opportunites for success experiences, role models and social persuasion.
Section 9:   Outcome expectations and imagined consequences of choosing certain career paths.
Section 10:   Career preparation self-efficacy

3.2. Development of the battery

Both the qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in an attempt to collect data in as comprehensive a manner as possible. Items in the protocol were therefore of two types:

A. Qualitative sections

These sections were in the form of narratives in response to open-ended questions. In addition, Research Partners were provided with an Observation Sheet (Appendix 3) and were required to document their experience of every session. This also proved to be a valuable source of information. The methodology used to cull qualitative information from the data is discussed in Section 9.3 below.

B. Quantitative items

Our reviews of the Indian literature indicated that much of the information that WORCC-IRS aimed to collect might not have been collected before in the Indian context. Therefore, the study relied on scales, questionnaires and inventories developed by The Promise Foundation. In addition the battery incorporated the Career Decision making Difficulties Questionnaire developed by Prof. Itamar Gati (2000), which has been standardised for international use. Further details about each of these scales are provided in the chapters under which they are discussed.

3.3. Pilot Studies

The first version of the WORCC-IRS battery was developed in English and trial tested through *pilot studies* on groups approximating the sample characteristics for the final Survey. The responses received through the pilot studies were discussed with the Advisory Committee and a draft form of the protocol was developed in English.

3.4. Vetting of the WORCC-IRS protocol

The draft protocol was presented to the Research Partners and discussed in detail. The necessary changes were made based on the feedback given by Research Partners. The emphasis was on ensuring that the protocol was locally relevant and at the same time applicable in all the regions under the study.

3.5. Translations and standardisation

Research Partners, worked in teams under the supervision of The Promise Foundation to produce the initial translation of the English original into their local languages. The objective was to balance a literary style with colloquial language that would be easily understood by students.

The first version of the local language protocol was put through a *standardised back-translation procedure*, to establish the equivalence of the vernacular versions to the English original. Individuals who were fluent in a given vernacular as well as in English were identified. These persons were blind to the English original and were given the vernacular versions for back-translations into English. This English translation was then compared with the English original to check for discrepancies in meaning. This process continued iteratively until a vernacular version that was equivalent to the English original was obtained for all the languages.

The final versions of the WORCC-IRS protocols have been developed in 8 different languages. Details are provided in Table 1 (Section 2).

4. Sample definition

The transition from school to work is a crucial stage in career development. A closer look at this stage of career development in the Indian situation indicates that a key developmental task is linked to *preparing* to enter the world of work. Given the critical nature of this age group and crucial nature of this career development task, WORCC-IRS focused on the career *preparation* behaviour of young people from the middle of adolescence to early adult hood. The following criteria were used to define the sample:

4.1. Age and Schooling:

Some of the most far-reaching career decisions are made between the end of high school and the end of the higher secondary years. Four orientations to career development seem to be manifested in the Indian situation, namely, begin working immediately, pursue college education, enter vocational training and no career plans. This is both a function of the young person's maturation for decision making, as well as requirements from the existing educational system in India. Occupation and job is also a matter of relevance to young people who are not in school because of various 'push out factors' and other socio-cultural and economic influences.

Hence the sample comprised individuals in the age range of 14 to 21 years, who are:

- in Classes, 10 and 12
- following Vocational Courses

A total of 88 institutions participated in WORCC- IRS (Appendix 5).

Attempts were made to also include the following in the sample:

- those who are within this age range but have not completed schooling
- those who have completed schooling but are presently unoccupied

4.2. Gender

The literature has consistently indicated that strong interactions are present between gender and career development. The sample therefore drew from both genders.

4.3. Socio-economic status (SES)

Researchers almost universally accept that SES has a defining impact on career development. This study covered the low, middle and upper middle SES groups.

4.4. Sampling procedure

The stratified random sampling procedure was used. Details of sample selection are given in Section 7.2.

A *nested design* was followed to study groups with unique needs. The nested design was followed by certain Research Partners only, and these samples would not be representative of all regions in the WORCC-IRS.

5. Ethical considerations

Participants' *Informed Consent* was obtained after they were explained the nature of the Survey and its purpose. Students who did not wish to participate were at liberty to leave.

Confidentiality has been preserved and the identity of individual participants / schools will not be revealed in relation to specific findings.

All participants were offered a free *Career Information Workshop*, after the Survey. The workshop gives students information about new careers emerging today and informs them about the talents and aptitudes required for these careers. All students in the target classes were invited to attend the workshop. Details are provided in Section 8 below.

6. Preparation for the survey

6.1. Pre-training orientation for Research Partners

Communications with Research Partners were initiated in the early part of March, 2005, approximately 3 months before the first consultation. During this time, the orientation to the basic principles of Career Psychology was initiated. Research Partners were supplied with the following study material:

- A summary of our review of the Indian literature.
- A Handbook on career counselling produced by The Promise Foundation

(Career Counselling: A Handbook, Tata McGraw Hill).
- Guided work sheets.

Data collection was combined with training. The emphasis at this stage was to collect information about attitudes pertaining to work and career, influences on career choices, career beliefs and other such qualitative information.

6.2. Adminstration Manual

A detailed Administration Manual (WORCC-IRS: Administration Manual, 2005, TPF) providing the rationale of the study and the methods for executing its various components was prepared. All training of Research Partners was located around this document.

6.3. The first consultation

The first consultation with the Research Partners was held from the 1st to the 5th of May, 2005 in Bangalore. Some of the important objectives of the consultation were as follows:

A.. Theoretical orientation

The self-study and pre-training orientation was used as a foundation to provide the Research Partners with a broader understanding of Career Psychology. The key principles of Career Psychology were presented, with particular emphasis on the Indian context.

B. Training on the method of administration

The Administration Manual was used to provide Research Partners a detailed orientation to the method and approach of the study. Most importantly, training focussed on applicational issues. Findings of pilot studies were presented as illustrations.
Some of the key themes that the training addressed and demonstrated were as follows:

- *Consistency* and *congruence* in approach across all regions.
- Remaining a *neutral and objective* observer was demonstrated. The importance of ensuring personal opinions did not influence respondents was emphasised.
- Giving *instructions* in a standardised manner.
- Answering students consistently giving the same or similar response to all students. The Administration Manual included answers to a list of *anticipated questions*.
- Ethical considerations with particular emphasis on confidentiality and professional conduct during the Survey.

C. Practicals

Research Partners interacted individually with a small number of young people who were representative of the final sample. Research Partners could actually experiment with the training they had been given.

D. Translations

The English to vernacular translations were initiated during this consultation under the supervision of experts from The Promise Foundation.

7. Execution of the WORCC-IRS: Survey component

Research Partners interacted with the respondents at two levels, namely the Survey and the Career Information Workshop. In all cases the Survey preceded the Career Information Workshop.

7.1. Survey: Format and design

Research Partners have been trained to follow an identical administration procedure to ensure consistency across the various regions. A variance in the procedure has been planned for samples participating in the *nested design.*

A group format was followed and group size ranged between 15 and 45 individuals. The time taken for the Survey ranged from 2 to 4 hours per group.

It was anticipated that respondents could become tired and bored if they had to go on answering questions. It was also anticipated that many would not be used to responding to the kind of questions presented by the WORCC-IRS battery. Therefore, Research Partners were trained to take each group through short activities designed to 'set the stage' for the next section. These activities were expected to be a break from writing and answering questions as well as provide a 'trial run' before respondents began on the actual questions. These activities are in a lighter vein and designed to also create some fun and a break from the monotony.

7.2. Survey: Participant recruitment and procedure

The sample definition has been discussed earlier. The procedure for sample selection was as follows:

- All institutions were selected from within a specific district.
- School types were classified as per the following criteria: Government Schools, Government Aided Schools and Unaided private schools
- Under the Vocational category, ITIs and Polytechnics were selected separately. Vocational school types were classified as per the same criteria used for selection of schools.
- In each school type, enough schools were identified to ensure a minimum of 90 students. Students selected for the survey were therefore from one institution or spread across 2 to 3 different institutions.
- The roll numbers of students were taken across the different institutions selected, for each school type. Lots were used to randomly select roll numbers to make up the survey sample. For each school type the survey sample comprised a minimum of 70 students.

- Research Partners then visited schools with the list of pre-selected roll-numbers, to conduct the Survey.

8. Execution of the WORCC-IRS: Career Information Workshop

In keeping with the project's objectives all Survey groups were offered a free half-a-day Career Information Workshop.

8.1. Content

The orientation of the Career Information Workshop was not toward a complete counselling programme. Instead, the objective was to offer information about occupations and careers to sensitise and inspire participants. All Research Partners were trained on a method developed by The Promise Foundation for group career counselling interventions. The Career Information Workshop was conducted *after* the survey.

The method uses *a multiple potentials* framework according to which participants learn about the different ways in which their talents could be manifested. Career choices are often limited to the careers the young person has heard about or has been exposed to. An objective of the Career Information Workshop therefore was to widen this horizon so as to provide a broader range of choice.

8.2. The Career Information Workshop Kit

The workshop is supported by a kit comprising, Career Name Flashcards and Career Definition Flashcards. Students' response to the Career Information Workshop across all regions has been overwhelmingly positive. This feedback once again highlights the urgent need for systematic and culturally validated career counselling.

9. Execution of the WORCC-IRS: Data management

9.1. Data Collection

Research Partners encountered numerous difficulties during data collection. Obtaining permissions to conduct the survey in private schools was particularly difficult. However most of them were able to overcome these difficulties and have worked hard to achieve the targets that have been set. The survey was also affected by natural calamities. Rains and floods in many parts of the country and the earthquake in Kashmir affected access to the sample. This delayed data collection and dispatch of completed protocols from some of the regions to our office in Bangalore. As a result, the original time lines could not be maintained.

9.2. Re-translation of student responses

In most regions the protocol was administered in the local language, apart from a limited number in English. Research Partners then re-translated student responses from the local

language into English. They had been trained on this procedure during the first consultation.

9.3. Management of qualitative data

Qualitative data emerging from the narratives and open-ended questions were examined using a modified analytic inductive approach (McMahon, Patton &Watson, 2003). The steps followed were:

- Open coding: through theme analysis for data reduction and categorization.
- Axial coding: to develop connections and linkages between themes and categories.
- Selective coding: to validate core categories or central themes around which other categories could be refined to consequently generate a conceptual framework.

9.4. Management of quantitative data

The WORCC-IRS protocol used standardised questionnaires, inventories and scales to collate quantitative data. This data was analysed as per the structure and norms of the instruments that were used. Further details are provided in later chapters.

9.5. Coding and data entry

This part of the project followed a three step process:

- Items were coded by trained staff from The Promise Foundation.
- Data entry was conducted through a team of data entry professionals who were oriented to the nature of the data and method of data entry required.
- Data cleaning and quality control was managed by the project leaders from The Promise Foundation. A random sample of 20% of the dataset was re-checked.

9.6. Data Analysis

SPSS was used as the primary software for data analysis.

A combination of statistical procedures were used for data analysis which included one way ANOVAs, Pearson's correlations, Principal Components Analysis and Non Parametric (Chi-square) tests. Details are provided in later chapters.

The WORCC-IRS design at this stage attempted to lay out a broad frame of reference within which to conduct the study. It was anticipated however that as the study progressed, new variables would emerge that may have to be controlled or included in the study. It was vital therefore that the approach to this investigation was kept flexible without being loose, and target driven without being rigid. The changes that occurred are reported in later chapters.

The following chapters present the WORCC-IRS findings.

Chapter 4

<u>An Introduction to the sample</u>

This chapter presents an overview of the WORCC-IRS sample details across socio-economic status, caste, gender, urban-rural divisions, location, school type and school board. Subsequent chapters will consider the interactions between these variables and crosscutting themes such as the process of career decision making, social cognitive influences, socio-cultural and psycho-social influences and self-efficacy for career preparation.

Conducting this survey presented challenges at multiple levels. It is important that the following limitations and qualifying criteria are kept in mind when interpreting the WORCC-IRS data.

1. Qualifying criteria

1.1. Earlier research

First of all WORCC-IRS attempted to address questions that do not seem to have been asked before in the Indian context. As a result there is not much in the form of a previously established body of knowledge that the study could be based upon.

1.2. Assessment tools

Tools for assessment and observation that are standardised for use in the Indian context are not many. An immediate challenge therefore was to blend the use of qualitative methods with quantitative techniques to study the multiple variables that this study set out to examine.

1.3. Linguistic diversity

Language diversity was a further challenge. It was necessary to take a multi-lingual approach. Concerted efforts were directed toward ensuring cross-language parity for the WORCC-IRS battery. After the survey, it was vital to ensure that nuances of narratives and descriptive information captured in different languages were preserved in translation into English.

1.4. Sample Size

WORCC-IRS has reached a total of approximately 7000 individuals in the regions under study. However due to delays caused by natural calamities and other unforeseen events, the planned timelines could not be maintained. Hence all the data has not been analysed in time for the Draft Report. This report presents information from 3799 completed protocols. Care has been taken to ensure that this number is representative of the entire

sample across age, region, class, school type and gender. Information from the remaining protocols will be included in the Final Report that will follow the NCCP.

1.5. Missing Data

In cases where small parts of a questionnaire (e.g. 2 to 3 items) were empty, the student's mean score was used to compensate for the missing data. Approximately 15% of the protocols had missing data of this nature. When an entire section was left unanswered, the protocol was dropped from the analysis. Approximately 4% of the protocols had to be rejected.

2. Socioeconomic status

2.1. Classification of SES groups

Research from different cultural contexts including the Indian environment has consistently revealed a strong relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and career preparation. WORCC-IRS will lay particular emphasis on understanding the interactions between SES and career preparation.

SES is itself a complex concept and it has been variously defined. Earlier definitions were restricted to the economic aspect and evaluated on the basis of income levels. The list of variables indicating SES has subsequently been enlarged to incorporate a number of other factors that contribute to a person's position along the continuum of socio-economic status (e.g. Kuppuswamy, 1959; Srivastava, 1991; Kapoor & Singh, 1998). Drawing from the ideas of Indian social scientists the WORCC-IRS SES Scale obtains socio-economic status information along multiple dimensions as follows:

- Parents' education
- Parents' occupation
- Material Possessions
- Family income per month
- Type of housing
- Electricity / water connection
- Reading material available in the home

Each of these categories are given a weighted score and summated to obtain a total SES score. The maximum obtainable score on the WORCC-IRS SES scale is 191. Analysis of the SES data indicated that the survey did not reach individuals from the high SES level. Therefore the total SES score has been classified into 3 groups, namely, Low SES, Middle SES and Upper middle SES.

All heads of institutions from where this data was collected were also required to provide an estimate of their student's SES backgrounds. Research Partners also provided a similar rating. These external criteria were used to validate the SES classification obtained through the WORCC-IRS SES scale.

2.2. A description of the SES groups

Information provided in Table 2 gives some insight into the three SES groups.

Table 2: An overview of parental employment, parental education and monthly income across low, middle and upper middle SES groups *(All values are in %)*

Descriptor	Details	Low SES (N = 1316)	Middle SES (N = 1233)	Upper Mid. SES (N = 1250)
Father's Employment	Unemployed for more than a year	34.3	12.6	0.28
	Irregular	15.3	2.1	0.2
	Temporary	31.4	22.0	4.0
	Permanent	18.8	63.3	93
Mother's Employment	Unemployed or not working	69.7	83.5	73.0
	Irregular	12.5	2.6	0.6
	Temporary	14.1	7.6	4.7
	Permanent	3.8	6.3	21.6
Father's education	Illiterate	22.6	3.3	0.2
	Primary School	30.4	9.2	1.5
	High School	35.4	41.2	10.3
	Intermediate	7.3	16.5	6.4
	Diploma	1.1	4.9	7.0
	Graduation	2.4	20.0	39.4
	Post Graduation	0.8	4.5	31.6
	Doctorate	0	0.3	3.5
Mother's education	Illiterate	40.6	16.0	3.4
	Primary School	33.7	22.4	5.5
	High School	21.9	42.1	18.2
	Intermediate	2.8	9.7	8.5
	Diploma	0.5	1.0	4.4
	Graduation	0.4	7.6	35.8
	Post Graduation	0.1	1.2	21.7
	Doctorate	0.1	0.1	2.6
Monthly Family Income	Range of income amongst majority of sample	Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 6,000	Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 20,000	Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 50,000

2.3. Type of parental occupations:

Low SES group:

Parental occupations mainly fall into the unskilled and semiskilled categories. Examples of occupations are: coolie, driver, office boy, sweeper, street vendors, farmer, watchman, milkman. A large percentage of mothers amongst this group worked as housemaids.

Middle SES group:

The majority of parental occupations fall in the skilled manual or skilled non manual categories. Examples of occupations are: clerk, supervisor, assistant manager, small sized business or industry, non officer level jobs in government departments, accountant.

Upper middle SES group:

The majority of parental occupations fall in the professional and managerial category. Examples of occupations are: lawyer, teacher, engineer, doctor, chartered accountant, manager, small - medium sized business or industry, architect.

3. Caste

The roots of caste run deep into the Indian psyche and have become intertwined with personal and occupational identity. Given the strong historical relationship between caste and occupation, WORCC-IRS included caste as an important variable to be studied. Classification was conducted under the supervision of a senior anthropologist who is also one of the WORCC-IRS advisors.

Details of Caste/tribe/religion were classified into the following scheme:

- General Caste (referring primarily to upper castes)
- Scheduled Castes
- Scheduled Tribes
- Backward Classes
- Religious Minorities
- Others

The identification and classification of Backward Classes is based on data drawn from the National Commission of backward Classes (Government of India) state-wise list (2005), identification and classification as Scheduled Caste and Tribes (from Part I-Rules and Orders under the Constitution, Vol II-Sec J). Much of the data and verification of General Caste and religious groups has been confirmed by referring to the book, 'People of India" by K S Singh (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992).

An effort has been made to represent sociological reality and the official classification of castes and tribes. Under General Caste, all groups such as Brahmins, Baniya, Vaishya, Mudhaliyar, Chettiyar, Jains, Sikhs etc have been included. Although Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka enjoy a dominant caste position in society, they are classified as 'Backward Classes' in the state and therefore have been placed under 'Backward Class' for this study. Nepalies and Gurkhas have been classified as 'others'. Attention has been paid to state-based variations such as Nayak in Karnantaka who are classified as 'Scheduled Tribe' and Nayak of Uttaranchal who are classified as 'Backward Classes'.

4. A Socio-demographic overview of the complete sample

The following pages introduce the reader to the socio-demographic and regional details of the WORCC-IRS sample.

Table 3: The complete sample: An overview of Age and Gender (N = 3799)
Data presented as: Number (%)

Age in years			Gender	
Mean age = 16.13 (SD:1.53)				
13 to 15	16 to 18	> 19	Male	Female
1523 (40)	2030 (53.5)	246 (6.5)	2036 (53.6)	1763 (46.4)

Table 4: The complete sample: An overview of Class, School Type and School Board (N = 3799)
Data presented as: Number (%)

Class			School Type			School Board		
10	12	Vocational	Govt.	Private Aided	Private Unaided	State	ICSE	CBSE
2028 (53.4)	1254 (33.0)	517 (13.6)	1607 (42.3)	1126 (29.6)	1066 (28.1)	2588 (68.1)	212 (5.6)	999 (26.3)

Table: 5 The complete sample: An overview of Socio-economic Status and Caste (N = 3799)
Data presented as: Number (%)

Socio-economic Status (SES)			Caste						
Low	Middle	Upper Middle	General	SC	ST	BC	R M	Other	NI
1316 (34.6)	1233 (32.5)	1250 (32.9)	1220 (32.1)	393 (10.3)	279 (7.3)	657 (17.3)	266 (7.0)	5 (0.1)	979 (25.8)

General: Primarily upper castes; SC = Scheduled Castes; ST = Scheduled Tribes; BC = Backward Classes;
Rm = Religious Minorities; Other = Nepalis and Ghurkas; NI = Not indicated

Table 6: An overview of the sample by region (N = 3799)
Data presented as: Number (%)

Place	Number	Age in years			Class			Gender		School Type			School Board		
		13 to 15	*16 to 18*	*> 19*	*10*	*12*	*Voc.*	*Male*	*Female*	*Govt.*	*Pvt. Aided*	*Pvt. Unaided*	*State*	*ICSE*	*CBSE*
Bangalore	706 (18.6)	430 (60.9)	263 (37.25)	13 (1.84)	498 (70.5)	208 (29.5)	0	409 (57.9)	297 (42.1)	213 (30.2)	77 (10.9)	416 (58.9)	353 (50)	141 (20)	212 (30)
Chennai	559 (14.6)	126 (22.54)	415 (74.23)	18 (3.22)	138 (24.7)	212 (37.9)	209 (37.4)	314 (56.2)	245 (43.8)	172 (30.8)	277 (49.6)	110 (19.7)	489 (87.5)	0	70 (12.5)
Dehradoon	485 (12.8)	199 (41.03)	273 (56.28)	13 (2.68)	280 (57.7)	205 (42.3)	0	208 (42.9)	277 (57.1)	140 (28.9)	145 (29.9)	200 (41.2)	280 (57.7)	70 (14.4)	135 (27.8)
Delhi	420 (11.1)	341 (56.19)	77 (18.33)	2 (0.47)	321 (76.4)	99 (23.6)	0	163 (38.8)	257 (61.2)	267 (63.6)	0	153 (36.4)	0	0	420* (100)
Guwahati	117 (3.1)	24 (20.51)	46 (31.39)	47 (40.17)	23 (19.7)	44 (37.6)	50 (42.7)	47 (40.2)	70 (59.8)	73 (62.4)	44 (37.6)	0	94 (80.3)	0	23 (19.7)
Goa	277 (7.3)	116 (41.87)	130 (46.93)	31 (11.19)	141 (50.9)	70 (25.3)	66 (23.8)	160 (57.8)	117 (42.2)	207 (74.7)	70 (25.3)	0	138 (49.8)	0	139 (50.2)
Rampur	252 (6.6)	83 (32.93)	159 (63.09)	10 (3.96)	140 (55.6)	112 (44.4)	0	140 (55.6)	112 (44.4)	252 (100)	0	0	252 (100)	0	0
Shimoga	558 (14.7)	177 (31.72)	279 (53.22)	84 (15.05)	210 (37.6)	206 (36.9)	142 (25.4)	347 (62.2)	211 (37.8)	211 (37.8)	275 (49.3)	72 (12.9)	558 (100)	0	0
Srinagar	209 (5.5)	67 (32.05)	137 (65.55)	5 (2.39)	140 (67.0)	69 (33.0)	0	146 (69.9)	63 (30.1)	72 (34.4)	137 65.6	0	209 (100)	0	0
Ukrul	216 (5.7)	73 (33.79)	120 (55.55)	23 (10.64)	137 (63.4)	29 (13.4)	50 (23.1)	102 (47.2)	114 (52.8)	0	102 (47.2)	114 (52.8)	216 (100)	0	0

Note: * State schools in these locations follow the CBSE.

As indicated above, the Draft Report is based on our analysis of the responses of this section of the sample, amounting to a total of 3799 individuals. It is anticipated that further guidelines for analysis will emerge from the National Consultation on Career Psychology. The final analysis will be conducted after the NCCP and the findings collated into the Final Report.

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Chapter 5

Privilege and Disadvantage

1. Chapter Focus

This chapter presents WORCC-IRS findings in relation to socio-economic status and career choices. As earlier defined (Chapter 4 Section 2), the present analysis is conducted across three SES groups, namely, low, middle and upper middle SES.

The analysis will focus on two specific issues as follows:

- The process of career preparation highlighting the following:
  - Differences across SES groups in orientation to career paths. Specific emphasis on interest, self-efficacy, prestige and perception of parental support.

- Social cognitive influences focussing on the following:
  - Perception of career barriers.
  - Career beliefs within each SES group.

2. Methods of analysis

2.1. Questionnaires

- The Career Path Orientation Scale – CPOS (Arulmani 2004).
- The Perceived Career Barriers Scale – PCBS (Arulmani 2004).
- The Career Belief Patterns Scale – (Arulmani, Van Laar & Easton 2004; Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004).

2.2. Narratives

Participants were encouraged to write narratives about their experience of career related barriers and career beliefs in their communities.

2.3. Data analysis

Statistical analysis for this chapter used the following methods:
- Descriptive analyses, including frequency and percentage analysis.
- Inferential analyses. A series of one way analysis of variance (anova). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey's HSD were used to further analyse the significance of difference between SES groups at the 0.05 level.

All data is presented in Appendix 4.

A thematic analysis of the narratives was also conducted. Exemplars of themes found in the texts will also be presented in the following sections.

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3. Clarification of terms

3.1. Career path:

Three career paths seem to commonly present themselves to the Indian young person at the point of transition from school:

1. Start working immediately if job is available, *without* further qualifications.
2. Find part time job and study side by side.
3. Take up further studies (either college or vocational training).

3.2. Career Interests:

Career interests are patterns of likes, dislikes and indifferences related to career development and occupations. Certain careers are attractive to certain people while the same careers may not be as attractive to others. During the initial stages of career development, the child may be drawn toward a wide range of careers and occupations. As the individual grows and matures economic, social and cultural factors shape initial orientations into career interests that are more socially acceptable.

3.3. Self-efficacy:

Self-efficacy is the confidence in the personal ability to be successful in the performance of a task. In this case self-efficacy for the three career paths described above was assessed.

3.4 Parental approval:

This term refers to the young person's perception of the extent to which their parents would support a given career choice. WORCC-IRS did not interact directly with parents. Instead data has been collected on participants' perception of their parents support and approval and endorsement of career options.

3.5. Career barriers:

Barriers are internal or external blocks that interfere or disrupt career preparation. Internal barriers may be related to self-concept, motivation to achieve and negative beliefs. External barriers may be related to external frustrations arising from lack of resources, discrimination, lack of information and so on. The manner in which an individual *perceives* a barrier determines to a large extent how the person will approach the barrier.

3.6. Career beliefs:

Career beliefs are a conglomerate of attitudes, opinions, convictions and notions that seem to cohere together to create mindsets that underlie people's orientation to the idea of a career. These patterns of thinking may or may not be grounded in rationality. Yet, whether accurate or not, these assumptions predispose the individual to making career decisions in a certain manner.

4. SES and career path orientations

This section presents the participant's orientations to three career paths:

- Start working immediately (without acquiring qualifications or skills).
- Find a part time job and study side by side.
- Take up full time studies (College or vocational).

The Career Path Orientation Scale – CPOS (Arulmani, 2004), was used to examine the participants' interest, self-efficacy, prestige attribution and perception of parental attitudes to the three paths described above. Participants are required to indicate their choices on a 5 point scale, where 1 indicates the lowest value and 5 indicates the highest value.

A percentage analysis of the participant's ratings on each of the dimensions was conducted, for each SES group. The percentages and Mean rating of each SES group on the 3 career paths are reported in Tables 7 to 10, in Appendix 4.

In the following sub-sections the low SES group is contrasted with the upper middle SES group. The middle SES groups were in the middle in all the data trends in this section.

4.1. Working Immediately

Participants are divided along SES lines in their response to the '*Start working immediately if a job is available'* career path option. As high as 46% of the low SES group rated this option as 'very interested' when compared to around 16% in the upper middle SES group. While almost 39% of the low SES group said they are 'very confident' to begin working immediately, only 13% reported the same degree of confidence in the upper middle SES groups. The uneven prestige allotted to such a career path emerges quite starkly on the ratings given across the SES groups. While almost 40% in the low SES group have rated this option as having 'high to very high prestige', in the upper middle SES group 40% have rated this option as having 'very low to somewhat low prestige'. We find these differences continuing on the parent approval dimension as well. While 60% of the low SES group reported that they perceived 'high and very high' parent approval for starting work immediately, 50% of the upper middle SES group reported 'low and somewhat low' parent approval for this career path option.

In summary, the low SES group's higher *interest* in finding work as soon as possible was also accompanied by a high self-efficacy along with a high prestige rating and parental approval for this career path. In contrast, the upper middle SES groups showed low self-efficacy, attributed low prestige and reported low parental approval for the option of beginning to work immediately after Std. 10 or 12.

4.2. Part Time Job with Study

Here again, *interest* in working part time and studying alongside seems to vary with SES level. While 26% in the low SES group have rated this option as 'very interested', 12% have done so in the upper middle SES group. Around 22% report being 'very confident to

take this option among the low SES groups, but only 11% in the upper middle SES group. The prestige level assigned to the part time job with study option is 'very low to somewhat low' in around 40% of the upper middle SES groups, while around 38% among the low SES groups assign 'high to very high prestige' for this option. A similar trend is seen in the parental approval for this career path. While more than 50% of the upper middle SES group have reported 'low and some low support', almost 50% of the low SES group have reported 'high to very high support'.

In summary, the low SES group's higher interest in part time job with studying was also matched by a high self-efficacy along with a high prestige rating and parental approval for this career path. In contrast, the upper middle SES groups showed a low prestige, low self-efficacy as well as low parental approval for this career path.

4.3. Full Time Studies

Interestingly, the stark differences seen in the earlier two career path options were not found for full time studies as an option. The *interest* expressed by the three SES groups for the full time studies career path option was somewhat similar. The ratings of 'quite interested and very interested' were given by around 65% in both the low SES group and upper middle SES groups. Around 15% in both groups rated as 'very low and somewhat low' in confidence to take up this option, in both groups; 6% and 3% of low and upper middle SES groups respectively said they would have 'very low support' from parents for this option.

An interesting pattern of *parental approval* emerges from this survey. All three SES groups perceive parental approval to be the highest for further studies full time after high school, as captured in Figure 1 below. However, as seen in Figure 1, the parental support for all three options seem to be somewhat uniform in the low SES groups, but quite mixed in the upper middle SES groups. Parental approval for further studies full time is substantially more than for work immediately and taking part time job and study.

Figure 1: Differences between SES groups' perception of parental approval for three career paths
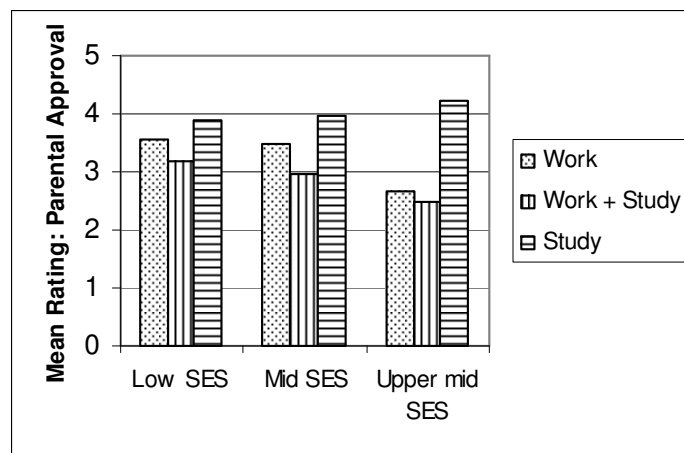
4.4. SES and Career Paths: Excerpts from narratives

Participants' orientations to career paths was elicited through narratives they were asked to write on the theme: 'Which career path are you going to take? What are the benefits of taking this path?' A sample of participants' narratives is presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Narratives of participants from different SES groups on the theme:
'Which career path are you going to take? What are its benefits?'

- Find part time job after class 10th and also study. Learning while earning what I like most. It is what I have to do to help my family.
    Boy, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Dehradun.

- I would prefer professional course because it has high salary and good status in society.
    Girl, Class 10, 14years, middle SES, Vasco, Goa.

- I will start working after 10th. I have to become financially independent.
    Boy, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Shimoga.

- I will take up arts after my 10th. This is a subject that will allow me to reach my goals easily.
    Girl, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Bangalore.

- I would like to take up commerce after 10th. I would like to take up MBA. I will able to make lots of money and have a successful career.
    Girl, Class 10, 15 years, upper middle SES, Bangalore.

- I will like to go for Technical training. Because it would help me in getting jobs. Now-a-days technical jobs are mostly taken into consideration.
    Girl, Class 10, Age 15 years, middle SES, Guwahati.

- After 10th, go for technical training. Complete the studies in short duration and can start working
    Girl, 17yrs, 2nd year Diploma, middle SES, Bhadravati.

- Find a part time job and study for higher secondary because as I finish my studies I will have some experience of job. Also I can earn and give some money at home.
    Boy, Class 12, 17 years, middle SES, Cuncolim, Goa.

- Finish higher secondary and go for vocational courses. If I take this path I will get a job soon after completion of this course.
    Girl, Class 12, 18 years, middle SES, Guwahati.

- Take up arts subjects after class10. It will benefit us in speaking English.
    Boy, Class 12, 18 years, middle SES, Ukhrul,

- I want to become an Engineer. As it will give happiness and money. I will get a beautiful wife which will make my parents proud.
    Boy, Class 12, 18 years, middle SES, Dhule.

- First you should take up a technical course. Then you should take a job after completion of education then you get rid of poverty and you are in a position to spend money.
    Boy, Diploma 2nd year,18 years, middle SES, Dhule.

- After 10th I will take up science and continue in this field. Because we can achieve whatever we want in life. Science is the basis of good careers.
    Girl, Class 10, 15years, upper middle SES, Bangalore.

4.5. Salient trends

Interest:

- The highest interest is for full time further studies after school completion. This is consistent across all SES groups.
- The middle and upper middle SES groups place a significantly lower value on starting to work immediately or taking a part time job, when compared with their low SES counterparts.

Self-efficacy:

- The low SES group shows high self-efficacy for all three career paths.

- The middle and upper middle SES groups show significantly lower self-efficacy for starting to work immediately and taking a part time job, in comparison to their self-efficacy for entering full time study after school completion.

Prestige:

- All SES groups place the highest prestige on pursuing full time studies.
- The middle and upper middle SES groups place a higher value on full time study as a career path than the low SES group.

Parental Approval:

- There is a markedly lower level of perceived parental approval for career paths other than full time study amongst the middle and upper middle SES groups.
- Perceived parental approval is highest for full time study also amongst the low SES group. Importantly, parental approval is high also for work immediately and part time work options. The quantum of difference in parental approval *between* the three career paths is therefore not as marked as it is for the middle and upper middle groups.

5. Perceived barriers and expression of self efficacy

The Perception of Career Barriers Scale – PCBS (Arulmani, 2004) was used to examine the participant's perception of barriers to career preparation. This scale comprises 24 items anchored to a 5 point scale. A rating of 1 on this scale indicates that the item presents a very small barrier and 5 indicates a significant barrier.

Data will be first presented on the consolidated scores related to perception of barriers and expression of self-efficacy (Section 4.1). Two specific career barrier themes will then be discussed:
- Barriers pertaining to Family Situation (Section 4.2).
- Barriers pertaining to Personal Capacity (Section 4.3)

For each of the above areas a series of one way anovas were conducted to analyse the significance of difference of the mean ratings between the SES groups. Table 12 in Appendix 4 presents the Mean ratings, the F ratios and the outcomes of post hoc tests

5.1. Overall perception of barriers and expression of self-efficacy

Perception of barriers is highest amongst the low SES group, lower amongst the middle SES group and lowest amongst the upper middle SES. In other words, low SES participants in this study seem to perceive more barriers to their career preparation than their higher SES counterparts.

The participants' expression of *self-efficacy* to face and overcome barriers also appears to be along similar lines. The mean rating of the upper middle SES group is significantly higher than the middle and low SES groups. The mean difference in the self-efficacy scores of the low SES group and the middle SES group are *not significant*. One interpretation of these findings is that the upper middle SES groups are more confident to overcome barriers they may face in relation to their career development when compared with their middle and low SES counterparts. This theme will be discussed further in the later sections.

5.2. Barriers pertaining to Family Situation and expression of self-efficacy

The perception of barriers pertaining to Family Situation is lowest amongst the upper middle SES and highest amongst the low SES group. The middle SES group falls in between.

Within Family Situation, the biggest barrier for the low SES group seems to be related to *financial difficulties* and *family responsibilities*. Figure 2 below presents the participant's ratings of some of the items to illustrate the stark differences between SES groups

**Figure 2: % of participants, across SES groups,
rating 3 statements as 'significant barrier' to career preparation**
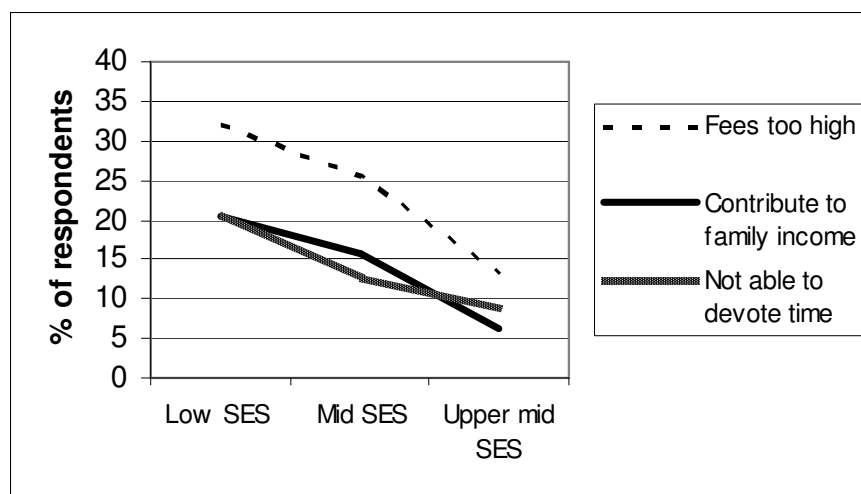
Statement 1:   *The fees I have to pay for further education is too high and my family will not be able to afford sending me for further education.*

23.1% of the low SES group rated this statement to be a 'significant barrier'. 15.4% of the middle SES and just 13% of the upper middle SES group marked this item at the same level on the barrier scale.

Statement 2:   *My family expects me to start contributing to the family income as soon as possible. As a result I will not be able to go for further education.*

While 20.3% of the low SES group rated this item as a significant barrier, lower percentages of participants at the middle (15.7%) and upper middle (6.3%) SES level gave a similar rating.

Statement 3:   *I have to do many things to help my family and so I may not be able to devote time or effort for career preparation.*

The trends are very similar to Statement 2. The largest percentage of participants rating this item as a 'significant barrier' belong to the low SES group (20.3%). On the other hand, 12.3% of middle and just 8.5% of the upper middle SES groups give a similar rating

Participants' *self-efficacy* to deal with the barriers to their career development was also examined. Self-efficacy to overcome barriers related to Family Situation was the lowest for the low SES and highest for the upper middle SES group. The difference in mean self-efficacy scores for overcoming barriers related to the family situation is *not* significantly different between the low and middle SES groups.

5.3. Barriers pertaining to Personal Capacity and expression of self-efficacy

The perception of *Personal Capacity* as a 'significant barrier' was the lowest amongst the upper middle SES group. The low SES group and middle SES group have higher barrier scores for Personal Capacity. Perception of barriers pertaining to personal capacity between participants of the low and middle SES groups is *not significantly different*.

Within Personal Capacity, difficulties related to *academic performance* seem to be the strongest barrier perceived by the low SES group. Responses to the following statement provide an example:

Statement: *My poor performance in studies will make it difficult for me to study further.*

22.4% of the low SES group rated this item as a significant barrier. In contrast, 17.1% from the middle and 12.9% of the upper middle SES groups rated this statement as a significant barrier.

Self-efficacy to overcome barriers related to Personal Capacity was the lowest for the low SES group and highest for the upper middle SES. As with self efficacy for Family Situation described above the mean self-efficacy score for overcoming barriers related to Personal Capacity is *not significantly different* between the low and middle SES groups.

5.4. SES and perception of career barriers: Excerpts from narratives

Participants' perceptions of career barriers were elicited through narratives they were asked to write on the theme: 'What are the kinds of barriers that you may face when you plan your career?' Excerpts from these narratives are presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Narratives of participants from different SES groups on the theme:
'What kind of barriers will you face when you plan your career?'

- I have to work because of poverty and because of many loans. This will be a barrier to further studies and career development.
    Boy, Class 10, 17years, low SES, Bangalore

- The barriers in my life are many. My family has financial problems, so I can't study for long. We have no suitable guidance or information about how to develop our careers. Politics in India is improper. No value is given for intelligence or merit. Only caste group is taken.
    Boy, Class 2nd year diploma, 17years, middle SES, Bhadravathi.

- I cannot speak English properly. I am scared of questions.
    Boy, Class 2nd year diploma, 17years, low SES, Bhadravathi.

- I want to become a doctor. But there is no doctor in my village. If my village had a doctor I could have gone to him to know about this career. My father is not in a position to pay my tuition fee
    Boy, 15 years, Class 10, middle SES, Srinagar.

- Higher studies take long time. Employment opportunities are limited in our state.
    Boy, 15 years, Class 10, middle SES, Srinagar.

- Different opinions from parents. I want to become a doctor but my parents want me to become lawyer. After my marriage my in-laws might not allow me to work.
    Girl, 15 years Class 10, middle SES, Srinagar.

- Getting less marks, financial problem, less information about career, opposition of elderly people. Educational facility not available and travelling facility is not available.
    Boy, 15 years, Class 10, middle SES, Dhule.

- Parents want me to work immediately after Diploma but I want to study BE
    Boy, 17 years, 2nd year diploma, middle SES, Chennai.

- My confidence is low. City educated boys are capable to face all problems. Due to change of language I am afraid of being taunted.
    Boy, 17 years, 2nd year diploma, middle SES, Dhule.

- As we are poor to prepare for a career is difficult. But why to study? Even when we have good degree we do not get a job.
    Boy, 15 years Class 10, middle SES, New Delhi.

5.5. Salient trends

- The number of barriers perceived and the significance of these barriers seems to increase with SES. The lowest SES group perceives the largest number of barriers to their career preparation.
- Two barrier themes, namely, barriers related to Family Situation and Personal Capacity were examined. Here again, the low SES group's perception of barriers was significantly higher than the high SES group for both the themes. Financial difficulties topped the list of barriers for the low SES group followed by family responsibilities and difficulties with academic performance.
- A similar inverse relationship was noted between SES and expression of self-efficacy to overcome barriers. Lower SES groups, perceived a higher level of barriers, and expressed a lower level of self-efficacy to overcome these barriers.
- Ironically, the higher SES groups experience a lower level of barriers, and express a higher self-efficacy.

6. SES and career beliefs

The Career Belief Patterns Scale – CBPS (Arulmani 2004) was used to examine the participant's social cognitions expressed in the form of career beliefs. The CBPS taps different kinds of career beliefs across 7 factors. Participants are presented with vignettes of real life situations and are required to indicate on a 7 point scale, the extent to which they agree with the manner in which the character in the vignette resolved the career preparation issue. A rating of 1 indicates the lowest level of agreement and 7 indicates the highest level of agreement. Higher scores reveal higher levels of *negativity* in career beliefs.

This section begins with information about the consolidated career beliefs of the three SES groups in the study. This is followed by details about career beliefs across the following categories:

- *Fatalistic beliefs*: Cognitions reflecting a defeatist and pessimistic attitude to career preparation.
- *Control and Self Direction Beliefs*: Beliefs reflecting the willingness to take control of one's life and make the best of what is available.

For each of the above areas a series of one way anovas were conducted to analyse the significance of difference of the mean ratings between the SES groups. Table 14 in Appendix 4 presents the Mean ratings, the F ratios and the outcomes of post hoc tests

6.1. Overall career belief patterns seen amongst the participant

The data shows that CBPS scores decrease as SES increases. The consolidated mean score obtained by the low SES group indicate a higher level of negativity in career beliefs in comparison to the middle and upper middle groups.

6.2. Fatalistic beliefs

The responses of the middle and upper middle groups indicate significantly lower fatalistic content in their career beliefs than the low SES group. Responses to the following item provide a pertinent illustration:

Statement: *I have seen how others have tried to develop their lives. I realise that building a career is difficult. I think it is better to just take what I get and manage.*

Amongst the low SES group, 18.2% of students rated this item at the highest level of agreement (7 points). Only 15.2% of the middle SES group and a mere 9% of the upper middle group gave a similar response.

It seems possible that the life situation of the low SES group predisposes them to view career preparation with fatalistic overtones.

6.3. Control and Self-direction beliefs

The low SES groups seem to have a lower orientation to exercising control over the trajectory of their lives. In contrast, the middle and upper middle groups show a stronger orientation to take control and engage with career development tasks. Responses to the following item provide an example:

Statement: *I do not know what kinds of difficulties I may face if I prepare for a career. Therefore I may not be successful in preparing for a career.*

Amongst the low SES group, 15.5% of students rated this item at the highest level of agreement (7 points). In contrast, 8.9% of the middle SES group gave this response while just 5.9% of the upper middle group rated this item at the highest level of agreement.

The lower SES groups seem to experience difficulties in believing that they can take control and attempt to direct their lives toward future goals. On the other hand, this feeling of helplessness and lack of control seems to decrease at higher SES levels.

6.4. SES and perception of career beliefs: Excerpts from narratives

Career beliefs were elicited through narratives on the theme: *'What do people in your area commonly believe about career planning?'* Table 15 below provides excerpts from some of these narratives.

Table 15: Narratives of participants from different SES groups on the theme:
What do people in your area commonly believe about career planning?

- Only rich people get job and succeed.
  Boy, Class 10, 15years, low SES, Vasco, Goa,

- All who study will not get jobs.
  Boy, Class 10, 16 years, low SES, Shimoga.

- I believe that the path to success is through science and engineering. Vocational courses are low in value. They are meant for those from poor families who cannot afford high education.
  Boy, Class 10, 16 years, upper middle SES, Bangalore.

- The main target for work is to become a wealthy person. I will achieve this by becoming a computer engineer because I am interested in computers.
  Boy, Class 12, 18 years, upper middle SES, Margao, Goa.

- In my family we believe the best careers are in business. I have seen a lot of my relatives take up the same and they all have been successful. My father will give me the capital to start and I will start my own business after I finish college.
  Girl, Class 10, 14 years, upper middle SES, Bangalore.

- Girls should not do professional courses. Any type of career is for rich men only.
  Girl, 2nd year diploma, 19 years, middle SES, Guwahati,

- In my native village people are less educated, very few people are educated. Most of the low earners earn about Rs 1000 per month. So there is a belief that there is no need for better job. In their mind their job is very good.
  Girl, 2nd year diploma, 19 years, middle SES, Guwahati,

- People go for higher studies thinking that they get good job, but fate plays bigger role than education. General knowledge is enough to get a job
  Boy, 2nd year diploma, 17years, low SES, Bhadravati.

- Brahmins' occupation – priest. Low caste people – gutter cleaning or to work in municipality. Rich people – doing big business
  Boy, 2nd year diploma, 17 years, upper middle SES, Bhadravati.

- Education given to girls is to the responsibilities as a housewife. Man should completely manage the financial problem of the family. All the girls should be supported to take up home science.
  Boy, Class 12, 17 years, upper middle SES, Ukhrul.

- Some parents believe it is better to support boys rather than girls because girls may marry other boys from other castes or tribes.
  Boy, Class 12, 17 years, upper middle SES, Ukhrul.

- People think that the main responsibility of a girl is to be a mother. So it is believed that girls waste time by going to school.
  Girl, Class 10, 15 years, middle SES, Srinagar,

- Girls should not go out for a job, then men will have to sit at home.
  Boy, Class 10, 16 years, middle SES, Dhule.

- It is always said that to differentiate between a girl and a boy is a crime in India but it is still there. But it is changing – girls say, 'We will do the work <u>and</u> study'. The older generation still says, 'Girls should look after the kitchen and children'.
  Girl, Class 10, 14 years, middle SES, Dhule.

6.5. Salient trends

Negativity in career beliefs

- Negativity in beliefs about career preparation seems to be stronger amongst lower SES groups.
- The upper middle SES groups seem to be most positive about planning for the future through career development when compared with other SES groups.

Fatalistic thinking

- Their life situation and experiences seem to predispose the lower SES groups to take a more pessimistic view of the future and of career development. As SES increases these fatalistic beliefs seem to diminish and are replaced by more positive and hopeful orientations.

Control and self-direction

- SES seems to contribute significantly to feelings of control over life situations that the young person experiences. The upper middle SES group expresses the highest level of control and self-direction in relation to those from less privileged backgrounds.

7. Consolidation of key findings

This chapter has brought to bear three variables on socio-economic status, namely, *career path orientations*, perceptions of *career barriers* and social cognitions in the form of *career beliefs*. The interactions of these variables with SES throw some light on how privilege and disadvantage could impact career development trajectories.

7.1. Orientations to career paths

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds seem to be more strongly oriented toward finding work as soon as possible. Those from more privileged homes on the other hand strongly prefer to go on for full time further education and prepare for the world of work. An important finding under this theme is the participants' perception of parental approval for the three different career paths. At the low SES level, while approval is the highest for full time study, the difference in parental approval for the other two paths is *not* markedly different. On the other hand as SES increases, parental approval for full time study increases, pushing approval for the other two options to markedly lower levels. The spread in parental approval becomes most stark in the upper middle groups. Here, parental approval for full time study is significantly higher than for the other two career paths. In fact this difference is so marked that it is likely that working full time or finding a part time job would be looked down upon at this SES level. It seems therefore that young people from more privileged backgrounds grow up in an environment where going on for full time study is expected, approved and supported. On the other hand disadvantaged young people seem to grow up in an environment where family support is more generalised. While full time study is not discredited (even sought after), economic

necessities seem to push the young person more strongly toward working full time or at least taking part time work, after Std. 10 and 12.

7.2. Barriers and beliefs

The lower SES group seems to perceive a higher level of barriers to their career development. As expected, *financial difficulties* are expressed as the most significant barrier. What is important however is the finding that young people from lower SES homes are expected to bear a significantly higher level of *family responsibilities* the higher SES groups are shielded from these responsibilities. Further, lower SES young people seem to perceive that their own *personal capacities* are such that they would have difficulties with career success. Similar sentiments are echoed in the career beliefs held by the different SES groups. A fatalistic outlook combined with a lower orientation to self-direction place the lower SES at a position of disadvantage for career preparation through formal education and qualification.

7.3. Expression of self-efficacy

It is particularly interesting to note the variations in self-efficacy across SES groups. Describing the lower SES groups as having low self efficacy for career preparation is not accurate. It is true that their self-efficacy for career development through full time study is somewhat lower than the self-efficacy expressed by the middle and upper middle groups. However the low SES group's self-efficacy for career development by working full time is high.

Perception of barriers and the nature of career beliefs seem to vary characteristically across SES groups. The manner in which these variables combine, seem to influence self-efficacy for certain kinds of career development trajectories. This could be one of the reasons SES groups differ in their orientations to career preparation.

7.4. Parental approval and attribution of prestige: Is there a subtext?

A final point for consideration is the nature and content of parental approval and the impact of prestige on career path orientations, with particular reference to the middle and upper middle groups. Parental approval moves the young in the family in a certain direction. In the upper middle class environment parental approval is strongest for full time further education. By itself, this could be indicative of the high quality of support that the young person receives to be adequately prepared for the world of work. However when taken together with prestige, parental approval could have other overtones. This is a point that will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter. However it is important to keep in mind that privilege could bring with it, the burden of making career choices that are socially acceptable – pushing the personhood of the individual to the background.

8. Privilege and Disadvantage: Implications and discussion points

8.1. Career development discontinuities: The accumulation of disadvantage

There is an intuitive awareness among many academics and practitioners that in comparison to other SES levels, the lower SES groups seem to be most vulnerable to discontinuities in their career development. This chapter has attempted to tease out the psychological strands that characterize these vulnerabilities.

Young people from poor homes are required to make career plans, while simultaneously grappling with poverty, unstable family structures and financial constraints. At a practical level families in poverty may have realistic concerns about their ability to pay for their children's further education. The task of meeting physical needs may be of greater importance to socio-economically disadvantaged individuals than seeking out information and making career plans. Survival needs in the present maybe so pressing that planning for what could come to fruition only sometime in the future may not be consistent with the reality perceptions of the young person from a poor home.

The strong predisposition of the disadvantaged to begin searching for work *before* acquiring work skills implies that they will only occupy an unskilled status in the world of work. This has far reaching ramifications on the continuity of their career development. Research into the effects of premature entry into the world of work on later employment has indicated that the poorly educated are at highest risk for unemployment in their later lives (Ekstrom, Freeberg and Rock, 1987). Others have found that those who left school at the minimum age to get work, were likely to spend most of their lives in part-time, unskilled jobs or on social welfare (Banks, 1992). In the absence of social welfare in India, unemployment is an ever present reality.

8.2. Career development discontinuities: When privilege turns to disadvantage

This chapter has consistently highlighted the psychological factors that underlie the difficulties of the disadvantaged. This does not mean that those from more privileged backgrounds are not at risk for career development discontinuities. The middle and upper middle SES groups in this study present a picture that is typical across cultures. This SES level offers a comfortable life style, with enough left over to give the children in the family a start in their lives. Middle class families have usually been able to accumulate sufficient resources to offer their children a foundation upon which they could build their lives. However these resources are not sufficient to preclude the necessity of children from these families having to become independent earners. In the absence of surpluses therefore, the middle class family's primary concern is the utilisation of existing resources in a manner that would yield the highest benefit. Making effective career choices and developing a career plan that would optimally use the family savings is therefore an important concern for families at this SES level. Furthermore, the middle classes have tasted the fruits of prosperity and have also equipped themselves with the wherewithal to rise to higher levels of prosperity. The middle classes in almost all cultures are simultaneously confronted by the threat of slipping back to lower levels of social standing and the real possibility of rising up to higher levels along the status

continuum. Indeed it is this group that has everything to lose and everything to gain. Career success is one of the most important mechanisms available to these families to ensure that they keep moving higher up along the SES continuum.

Driven as they are by high aspirations and the desire to reach higher pinnacles of success, the middle classes are at high risk to choosing careers based on what the career offers rather than grounding career choice on the personhood of the career chooser. The findings on parental approval at one level indicate the kind of support that young people receive from their parents and families. At another level this could also be indicative of the kind of pressure these young people experience to 'get into the right college', and 'make socially acceptable choices'. Counsellors are repeatedly presented with young people from the middle classes who were forced to choose careers that were popular and 'in demand', but who later discovered that their real interests and talents lay elsewhere. Of course this is not always the case. Yet, the number of young people who do express dissatisfaction with career choices is alarmingly high. In such situations a person from a privileged background could enter the world of work from a position of disadvantage. The point we make at the conclusion of this chapter is that career counselling needs are present, albeit in different forms, irrespective of whether the individual is from a background of disadvantage or privilege.

9. Relevance of career counselling

In reality the importance of career planning is independent of socio-economic status. Career counselling is relevant and necessary for *all social classes*. The crucial point to be noted particularly in the Indian ethos is that counselling needs *vary* significantly across social groups. A single, standardised intervention cannot adequately address career development needs over a wide range of groups. While the themes and targets of counselling are perhaps similar, the methods of implementation need to be finely tuned to the special requirements that emerge within different socio-economic status groups. For example, career counselling that attempts to facilitate livelihood planning for the socio-economically disadvantaged would need to take serious note of the fatalistic overtones and the negative career beliefs that seem to characterise the young person's view of future. Of course this is not always the case. Yet, interventions for livelihood empowerment often do not account for the career beliefs of the disadvantaged young. In similar manner career counselling would need to address the single minded search of middle and upper middle groups to find success through 'good' careers.

A relevant career counselling programme would address the question of transition from school in a person-centered manner. For some this may mean college education for others it may mean vocational education. Effective counselling would enhance the individual's employability by preparing him or her to enter the world of work from a position of strength rather than disadvantage. Most importantly, a career counselling programme that takes privilege and disadvantage into account would be equipped to empower young people to maximise their talents regardless of their backgrounds.

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Chapter 6

Pride and Prejudice

1. Chapter Focus

Two clear post-school career preparation pathways emerge from within the Indian educational system. One of these paths is based on a system of degrees obtained through college / university education. The other is based on diplomas and certificates awarded through Polytechnics and Industrial Training Institutes. This chapter presents WORCC-IRS findings pertaining to the impact of occupational stereotypes on the young person's preparation for further education through these systems of study. The following themes are examined:

- Occupational prestige.
- Orientations to subject choices. This is further broken up into: Science, Arts and Commerce and the Vocational subject combinations.

As in Chapter 5, socio-economic status will continue to be the backdrop against which young people's orientations to educational and career choices will be presented in this chapter.

2. Methods of analysis

2.1. Questionnaires

- The Career and Occupational Prestige Scale – COPS (Arulmani, 2000).
- The Subject Choice Orientation Scale – SCOS (Arulmani 2004).

2.2. Narratives

Participants were encouraged to describe their subject choices and preferences.

2.3. Focus Group discussions

Discussions were held in small groups in the Chennai and Bangalore locations on issues linked with subject choices and occupational orientations.

2.4. Data analysis

Descriptive analyses, including frequency and percentage analysis, were used to understand the data from the two Scales. A thematic analysis of the narratives and the focus group discussions was conducted to understand perceptions of the participants' on the key issues to be presented in this chapter. Exemplars of themes from the narratives and discussions will also be presented in the following sections.

3. Clarification of terms

3.1. Occupational prestige

Social and cultural forces grade occupations on a hierarchy of *prestige*. The respectability attributed to an occupation plays a powerful role in shaping interest directed toward that occupation. Children begin to recognise prestige linked differences among jobs and thereby learn to include or eliminate occupational alternatives.

Career barriers, Career beliefs, Career path, Interests, Self-efficacy and Parental Approval are other terms used in this chapter, and readers are referred to Chapter 5 (Section 2) for a description of these terms.

4. Occupational Prestige

The Career and Occupational Prestige Scale – COPS (Arulmani, 2000) was used to examine the prestige that participants attributed to different occupations and the corresponding Interest, Self-efficacy and perception of Parental Approval. The scale comprises a list of 28 occupations. Participants are required to indicate their choices on a 5 point scale, where 1 indicates the lowest value and 5 indicates the highest value.

4.1. Occupational Prestige Hierarchy:

The impact of prestige on career preferences has been documented in both the Indian and the international literature. WORCC-IRS attempted to gain insights into the manner in which Indian young people rank the relative prestige levels of occupations. Table 16 below presents the 28 occupations in descending order of prestige ranking with corresponding indications of Interest, Self-Efficacy and Parent Approval.

Table 16: Prestige hierarchy of occupations with mean ratings of prestige, interest, self efficacy and parental approval

Occupation	Prestige Rank	Prestige	Interest	Self-efficacy	Parent Approval
Scientist	1	3.72	3.28	3.15	3.64
Computer Scientist	2	3.68	3.48	3.34	3.67
Engineering	3	3.68	3.51	3.41	3.75
Doctor	4	3.58	3.18	3.09	3.62
Teacher	5	3.30	2.92	3.01	3.29
Lawyer	6	3.18	2.53	2.56	3.12
Police Inspector	7	3.11	2.83	2.81	2.97
Bio Technologist	8	3.09	2.76	2.68	3.09
Financial Manager	9	3.09	2.82	2.77	3.06
Chartered Accountant	10	3.06	2.65	2.66	3.04
Journalist	11	2.91	2.45	2.51	2.79
Architect	12	2.89	2.63	2.61	2.86
Social Worker	13	2.87	2.69	2.70	2.75
Psychologist	14	2.86	2.60	2.58	2.77
Agricultural Scientist	15	2.78	2.50	2.47	2.72
Hotel Manager	16	2.75	2.58	2.60	2.69
Economist	17	2.74	2.36	2.40	2.67
Ayurved	18	2.69	2.40	2.39	2.65
Public Relations Officer	19	2.59	2.31	2.34	2.50
Secretary	20	2.55	2.23	2.36	2.59
Accounts Clerk	21	2.46	2.13	2.25	2.48
Library Scientist	22	2.34	2.01	2.16	2.37
Artisan	23	2.28	2.08	2.13	2.21
Chef	24	2.25	1.99	2.05	2.16
Cook	25	2.17	2.02	2.16	2.17
Farmer	26	2.09	1.82	1.96	1.98
Shop Keeper	27	2.07	1.83	1.96	2.00
Carpenter	28	1.88	1.63	1.75	1.84

Note: *1 = very low prestige, 2 = somewhat low prestige, 3 = average prestige, 4 = high prestige, 5 = very high prestige.*

The data shows that *Scientist* tops the list, attracting the *highest* level of prestige. Interestingly, *Computer Scientist* comes a close second across the *entire* sample (all SES groups, gender and regional variations included). As expected, Doctor and Engineer are also at the top of the list. It is important to note that occupations receiving the *lowest* prestige ratings are those belonging to the blue collar and vocational category.

4.2. A binding force

Prestige seems to be a binding force across these other areas. Even a cursory look at Table 16 will show the close linkages between drop in occupation prestige ratings and a drop in interest, self efficacy and parental approval ratings. To study these associations further a correlational analysis across the four variables was also conducted. A strong, positive and significant correlation was seen between Prestige, Interest, Self-efficacy and Parental Approval. All correlations are in the region of 0.9 (Table 17, Appendix 4).

Departures from this trend are however seen on a few careers. The ratings for Lawyer, Police Inspector, Bio Technologist, Financial Manager and Chartered Accountant for example, show some variations in ratings. These careers have been rated with high prestige but are rated at somewhat lower levels of Interest, Self-Efficacy and Parental Approval. One interpretation of this variation in rating could be the lack of adequate information about these careers. The relationship between knowledge about careers and career choice is an interesting issue for careers counselling services and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7 (Sections 5 and 7.1).

4.3. Socio-economic status and occupational prestige

SES does not seem to influence participants' attribution of prestige to occupations. When occupational prestige was classified separately by SES an almost identical occupational hierarchy emerged across the low, middle and upper middle groups.

The impact of SES however is seen when questions of dignity and social status are raised. For example, during focus groups discussions, the middle and upper middle SES almost unanimously felt that occupations such as Farmer and Carpenter were of low status and required 'no formal training' or 'qualifications'. These participants felt that they would not be respected if they opted for 'such careers'. Similar sentiments were not as frequent and all pervasive among the low SES group.

4.4. Socioeconomic status and occupational prestige: Excerpts from narratives

Table 18 below gives excerpts from the narratives and focus group discussions to illustrate the ways in which prestige perceptions influence career orientations.

Table 18: Prestige perceptions and career choices

- "The career should be hereditary. Carpenter's son should be carpenter."
    Girl, Class. 10, 15 years, upper middle SES, Bangalore.

- I want to became an astronaut, because I love to explore mysteries of outer space. Such a career will give a high status in the world society.
    Boy, Class. 10, 14 years, upper middle SES, Vasco, Goa. .

- My dream to become a computer engineer because there will be more demand and status in the society will be more.
    Girl, Class 10, 15years, upper middle Vasco, Goa.

- People commonly say, poor people's children are never clever. So they should do the simple jobs that don't have high status or prestige. So there is low status for some jobs. If rich people became carpenters or plumbers, then the status of these jobs will go up.
    Boy, 2nd year diploma, 18 years, middle SES, middle SES, Chennai

- I am studying in this technical diploma course. I know that I will get a job soon after I finish. But it will be a lower pay than engineers. I also puts me lower in the social scale. Technicians are less important than engineers.
    Boy, 2nd year diploma, 18 years, middle SES, middle SES, Chennai.

4.5. Salient Trends

- The data suggests the existence of an occupational prestige hierarchy, where science oriented professional careers emerge as the most prestigious.
- Computer Science emerges second highest on the prestige ladder cutting across age, gender, SES and region.
- Blue collar professions are attributed with the lowest level of prestige.
- Middle and upper middle SES groups view the 'low prestige careers' as requiring 'no formal training'.

5. Orientation to subject choices

The earlier analysis of occupational prestige is followed up in this section with an examination of participant's orientations to available *subject combinations* in India. The four commonly available choices that WORCC-IRS focussed on was science, arts, commerce and the vocational courses.

5.1. Orientation to subject choices: Excerpts from narratives.

This section begins with excerpts from student's narratives that reflect their orientation to the three different subject choices under discussion. Table 19 below has excerpts from participant's narratives on career beliefs as well as career paths that reflect the ways in which different subject choices are perceived.

Table 19: Statements about subject choices

Common beliefs in my community:

- Take up business if you are not good at studies. Study commerce.
   Boy, Class 10, 15 yrs, upper middle SES, Bangalore

- Hardworking student is a science student.
   Boy, Class 10, 15 yrs, upper middle SES, Bangalore

- Only dull children take commerce.
   Girl, Class 10, 14 yrs, middle SES, Vasco

- Students who are not intelligent must study arts.
   Boy, Class 10, 15 yrs, upper middle SES, Srinagar, Kashmir.

- One should not do graduation Arts. Rather go for a job.
   Boy, Class 12, 16 yrs, upper middle SES, Dhule, Maharashtra

- Take up arts subjects after class10. It will benefit us in speaking English.
   Boy, Class 12, 18 years, middle SES, Ukhrul, Manipur

**Table 19: Statements about subject choices (Cont'd)**

My career path:

- "The career I would take after 10th is science which would help me in becoming a doctor or scientist. I don' know the benefits (of these careers) yet."
  Boy, Class 10, 15 yrs, upper middle SES, Bangalore.

- "I will take up Arts as I can be a lawyer, teacher, journalist etc."
  Girl, Class 12, 16 yrs, middle SES, Margaon.

- "Like to take up commerce after 10th and want to become bank cashier."
  Boy, Class 10, 15 yrs, middle SES, Shimoga.

- "I am Poor in Maths & Science, therefore parents asking me to take Commerce."
  Boy, Class 10, 16 yrs, upper middle SES, Dehradoon.

- "I want to open a (beauty) parlour after my PUC education."
  Girl, Class 10, 16 yrs, low SES, Bangalore

- I would like to finish higher secondary in Science. And then go for technical training (vocational courses) because I feel that I can do better in this and I am sure I can be a success in my life.
  Girl, Class 10, 16 yrs, middle SES, Guwahati.

- "My dream is to became a chef but I will have to lose many years for that. I will have to complete my 10th than do a diploma course than finish my training in some five star hotel then for few years as a cook and than I will be called a chef."
  Boy, Class 12, 17 yrs, middle SES, Cuncolim.

- "After completing my OM course I will do MBA because I completed my H.S in commerce stream. I will go for business line because now days we find scarcity of govt jobs. After MBA I will do own business in Computers."
  Girl, 2nd year diploma in Office Management, 18 yrs, middle SES, Guwahati

- "My aim is to become a computer engineer. I will take maths. To achieve this goal I must get above 450 Marks in S.S.L.C. and above 1050 marks in + 12 Exam. To achieve this I must work now it."
  Boy, Class 10. 16 yrs, middle SES, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu.

5.2. Orientation to subject choices: Trends across SES groups

The Subject Choice Orientation Scale – SCOS (Arulmani, 2004) was used to examine participants' Interest, Self-efficacy, Prestige attribution and perception of Parental Approval to different subject options. Participants are required to indicate their choices on a 5 point scale, where 1 indicates the lowest value and 5 indicates the highest value. A percentage analysis of the participant's ratings on each the dimensions was conducted, for each SES group. The percentages and Mean rating of each SES group on the 4 subject options are reported in Tables 20 and 21, in Appendix 4.

Figure 2 below presents the data from this scale analysed by SES level. The participants' interest for Science, Arts, Commerce and Vocational courses is given.

**Figure 2: Participants' levels of interest for
science, arts, commerce and vocational courses analysed by SES**
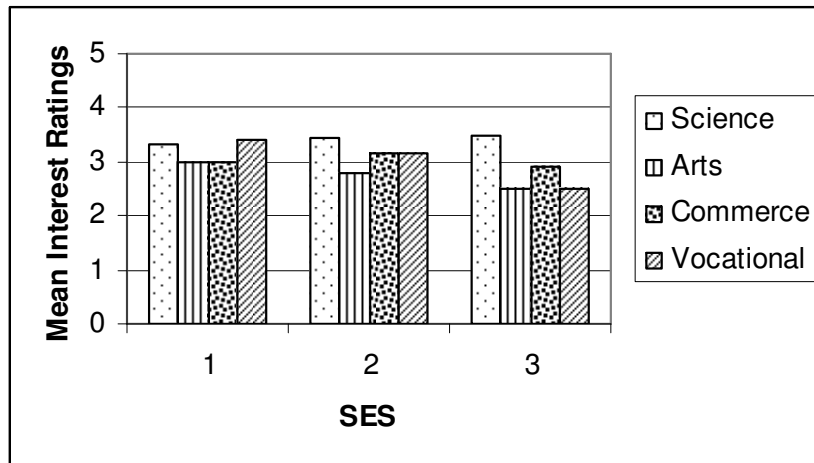
1 = Low SES; 2 = Middle SES; 3 = Upper middle SES

Two important contrasts in the data are particularly noteworthy. Continuing with the trends seen with occupational choices in the earlier sections, differences are evident in choices for science and vocational courses. The second contrast is in the patterns of interest, prestige and parental approval seen among the low SES group as against the upper middle SES group. These themes will now be discussed.

5.3. Science and vocational courses: A contrast

Around half of all participants in all the SES groups have rated the Science option as 'quite interested' or 'very interested' (52% of the low, 53% of the middle and 58% of the upper-middle SES groups). In contrast, the rating of interest for the vocational courses is quite different. While 53% of the low SES group is 'quite' or 'very interested', 32% of the upper middle have rated a firm 'low interest' for vocational courses. But around 25% of the upper middle groups have given a 'quite' or 'very interested' rating for this subject option.

The pattern of interest of the low SES group appears to be somewhat similar for both the Science option as well as the Vocational option (see Means in Table 21 Appendix 4). In contrast the Mean rating of the upper middle for the science option is in the 'quite interested' range while for the vocational courses is in the 'somewhat interested' range.

The patterns of prestige attributions also are dissimilar across the SES groups. While almost two thirds of upper SES group (71%) rates science to be 'high to very high prestige' option, 42% rate the vocational option as 'very low or low prestige'. Among the low SES group both science and vocational courses get similar Mean ratings (Table

21) with a rating of 'high to very high prestige' being given by close to half of the participants (51% and 49% respectively).

The Parental Approval variable shows similarly sharp contrasts. The upper middle group perceives low Parental Approval for vocational courses with as high as 41% rating 'low' to 'somewhat low' support for this option. Approval for Science courses is however significantly higher with around 54% rating 'very high support' from parents. The Mean Parental Approval ratings for the Science option is in the 'high support' range. For the Vocational option on the other hand, it is in the 'somewhat low to average support range'. In contrast, support from parents in the low SES group *does not show such acute variations*. In both subject options the Mean Parent Approval ratings are in the average to high support range.

5.4. Arts and Commerce

Interest in the *Commerce* subjects is low but fairly even across the three SES groups. Similar scores are noted across all three groups for Self-efficacy, Prestige and Parental Approval.

Arts trails the list, attracting the lowest level of Interest across all three SES groups. Here again, the highest contrasts are seen within the upper middle group. The lowest level of Prestige is attributed to the Arts by the upper middle group (Mean: 2.84; SD: 1.31) in comparison to the other groups. Similarly perception of Parental Approval for the Arts is the lowest for the upper middle group (Mean: 2.83; SD: 1.46).

5.5. Attitudes of young people pursuing vocational courses

Deeply insightful information emerged through a series of focus group discussions that were held with a group of young people within this sample who were already in vocational courses (ITIs and polytechnics). Some of them indicated that they initially had misgivings about vocational courses and took them up because they had no other option. But once they entered the course, their opinions about the ways in which the course would help them in their future seems to have changed for the positive. While the majority of the individuals within this group were from low SES backgrounds, this positive attitude extended also to the small number of students from the middle and upper middle SES groups as well. Excerpts from narratives and points of view expressed during focussed group discussions by participants' already studying in ITIs or Polytechnics are presented in Table 22.

Table 22: Statements from participants in vocational courses

- I did well in my studies but could not get into any college because of financial problems. My parents put me into this polytechnic as a last resort. I was very depressed. But slowly my ideas changed. I realised that through this course I can actually find a job easily. It is also a very interesting course. Through your report please tell teachers not to discourage children from taking up polytechnic courses.
  Boy, 2nd year Mechanical Engineering diploma, 19 yrs, low SES, Chennai.

- I joined this diploma course even though I wanted to go to college. It was because my family had no other option. I thought I would drop out. But I am still in this course after 2 years! I like it so much now. I am learning electronics. I can get a job. This course will help me become independent
  Girl, 2nd year Electronics Engineering diploma, 18 years, low SES, Chennai

- "After 10th, go for technical training. Then you can complete the studies in short duration and can start working."
  Girl, 2nd year diploma, 17 years, middle SES, Bhadravathi

- "I want to be grade 1 stenographer because I am continuing my study in modern management in Girls Polytechnic. I will do hard work and appear in grade exams held by the govt."
  Girl, 2nd year Office Management diploma, 19 years, middle SES, Guwahati

- "I want to go for research or want to go abroad. But not sure of competing with citizens of other nations."
  Boy, 2nd year Electrical Engineering diploma, 17 years, upper middle SES, Bhadravathi

- "Because we get job very quickly I can look after my family happily."
  Boy, 2nd year Metallurgical Engineering diploma, 17 years, low SES, Bhadravathi

- "I want to become an independent girl in my performance and also I believe myself for doing something."
  Girl, 2nd year ITI, 19 years, low SES, Guwahati.

5.6. Salient Trends

Interest

- The Sciences top the list attracting the highest interest scores across all SES groups.
- The lower SES groups place an equally high interest on vocational courses and science courses.
- Sharp contrasts are seen between the upper middle group's preferences for science vs. vocational courses, with a significantly lower interest being directed toward vocational training.
- Interest in commerce courses is fairly even across all SES groups.
- All SES groups have placed arts subjects at the lowest level of interest.

Self-efficacy

- The low SES group shows high self-efficacy for vocational courses.
- The upper middle SES group shows significantly lower self-efficacy for vocational courses in comparison to their self-efficacy scores for science courses.

Prestige

- For the middle SES groups the prestige hierarchy for subject choices is science, followed by commerce, vocational courses and arts.
- For the low SES groups the hierarchy is science with vocational courses coming a close second. This is followed by commerce, with arts coming last.
- For the high-income groups the prestige hierarchy is science, followed by commerce. Arts comes next and vocational courses are placed at the lowest level of prestige.

Parental Approval

- Parental approval is strongly linked with certain options mainly in the upper middle group. Parental approval is markedly lower for arts and vocational courses and is very high for science courses.
- For the low and middle SES groups, parental approval is much less acutely different across subject options.

6. Consolidation of key findings

6.1. Occupational prestige and subject choices

The prestige hierarchy noted within this sample is likely to be present in all cultures. The interesting point that emerged was with regard to the *sort* of careers that were categorised as having high and low prestige. Occupations that received the lowest prestige ratings were those belonging to the vocational category, while the Science oriented careers were given the highest ratings.

The influence of occupational prestige on *subject choice* preferences seems to have a characteristic pattern across SES groups. The findings suggest that it is the upper middle group that is strongly affected by perceptions of prestige and social status. It is true that participants from lower SES group do place blue collar professions at a lower level of prestige. However their choice of courses and subject options does not seem to be affected by the perceived prestige levels of these occupations. This is indicated by the equally high importance that the low SES group places on Science and Vocational courses. In contrast, the upper middle group's subject choices seem to align with prestige perceptions. This group places a significantly higher value on the Sciences, a moderate value on Commerce and correspondingly low values on the Arts and Vocational courses.

7. Pride and Prejudice: Implications and discussion points

7.1. A matrix of interwoven linkages

'Pride and Prejudice' seem to have a definite bearing on the manner in which occupations are perceived. Analysis of occupational prestige revealed the presence of a hierarchy of career preferences that seems to be consistent across the entire sample. This was an expected finding. Of particular significance is the finding that strong relationships exist between the other variables examined along with Prestige. The data shows that Interest,

Self-efficacy and Parental Approval increase or decrease with the Prestige rankings of a given occupation. High prestige occupations draw correspondingly high scores for Interest, Self-efficacy and Parental Approval, while these variables attract correspondingly lower values for low prestige occupations. It is against the backdrop of this tightly interwoven fabric of relationships that career orientations seem to be expressed in the Indian context.

7.2. Degree vs. diploma

The pre-occupation with obtaining a college degree seems be a largely middle – upper middle class one. It was also observed that a large percentage of this group linked no specific career goals to going to college other than 'I must have a degree'. The impact of prestige was such that a large number of middle and upper middle participants intended to pursue college education, even if this did not lead to direct employment. This was a more commonly prevalent trend in the smaller towns represented in the study.

Particularly striking is the change in attitudes seen amongst participants who had already taken up the vocational training option. While most of them had initial reservations these opinions changed once they entered the course. A number of these young people showed strongly positive attitudes toward the course, as well as toward vocational careers. Participants believed that the vocational courses prepared them well both with skills and sufficient theoretical knowledge. The course seemed to imbue them with confidence for employment in the future.

7.3. Occupationalism

Other Indian studies (e.g. Akhilesh, 1991; Thomas, 1997; Desai & Whiteside, 2000) have also found that prestige factors have a strong impact on career decision-making. First of all, it seems that careers that are accorded lower prestige are also accorded lower *dignity*. One consequence is that individuals are judged on the basis of their occupational membership. An engineer may be treated more respectfully than a carpenter regardless of character or competence. John Krumboltz, a well known Career Psychologist, refers to this 'discrimination on the basis of membership in an occupation', as occupationalism (Krumboltz, 2004). One consequence of occupationalism is that young people aspiring to win the respect of their peers and parents may choose to enter a particular occupation, not because they would enjoy the work, but because they want to be deemed worthy of respect by virtue of their future occupational membership.

7.4. Qualification, Role and Remuneration

Career roles that are supervisory or managerial are accorded more dignity than skill and production oriented roles. It is believed that degree based training leads to managerial roles while diploma courses lead to occupations involving actual production. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the middle and upper middle SES groups place degrees at a higher level of preference than diplomas.

Such attitudes also seem to prevail in the minds of *employers*. A direct outcome of such an approach to labour is that vocationally oriented occupations are not as highly paid as those based on college education. With large numbers preferring degree courses, a significant lacuna is created in the vocational area. One recent report indicates that a mere 5% of Indian students actually opt for vocational courses, while the number targeted by the government was 25% (National Council for Education, Research and Training, 2001). The fact that the largest numbers of jobs are available in the vocational area does not seem to significantly influence the career choice process.

8. Relevance of career counselling

Students often approach career planning with biases. 'Degree is better than diploma', or 'Arts is not for the intelligent', are examples of career beliefs that reflect such biases. More often than not, it is such misconceptions that drive career choice rather than well thought out plans. An important component of career counselling would be to address such ideas and beliefs.

It is important that a career counselling programme helps delink degrees and diplomas from prestige attributes. It is also essential that the value of all courses of study is highlighted. An effective career counselling programme would build an awareness of the characteristics and the final outcome of the various career paths available within the Indian system.

A tentative conclusion from the trends seen in this survey suggests that occupational prestige is not as deeply embedded in the livelihood planning of youth in poverty as in the youth from the more socio-economically advantaged homes. The issue of prestige thus gains greater importance in the career counselling programmes for the middle and upper middle class homes.

It is vital to note however that it is *not* the objective of career counselling to 'convince' young people that they ought to take up a degree or study the arts or go for vocational training. Instead a fundamental concern of career counselling would be to help the young make choices based on personal satisfaction, liberating themselves from the shackles of occupational pride and prejudice.

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Chapter 7

Labour market vs. Educational leadership:

Is there a dynamic tension?

1. Chapter Focus

Career choice is often influenced strongly by labour market cycles and the question of finding a good fit between self and occupation is often left unanswered. Entry into the world of work may in effect be reduced to a response to the short term interests of employers. The possibility of career development being a mechanism for learning, personal growth and potential realisation could diminish in importance.

This chapter presents WORCC-IRS findings in relation to career counselling being a bridge between the world of education and the world of work. The analysis will focus on the following specific issues:

- Interest profiles seen across the sample.
- Regional variations in interest profiles and career preferences.
- Interactions between personal interests and career preferences.
- Interactions between personal interests and knowledge about the world of work.
- Congruence (or the lack of it) between personal interests and career preferences.
- Educational leadership in preparing the young person to enter the world of work.

2. Methods of analysis

2.1. Questionnaires

- The Personal Interest Profile – PIP (Arulmani 2000, 2004).
- The Career and Occupational Prestige Scale – COPS (Arulmani, 2000).
- The Career and Occupation Awareness Indicator – COAI (Arulmani, 2001).

2.2. Narratives

Participants were encouraged to write narratives about their aspirations and dreams.

2.3. Focus Group discussions

Discussions were held in small groups in the Chennai and Bangalore locations to draw out participants' orientations to the world of work.

2.4. Data analysis

Statistical analysis for this chapter used the following methods:

- Descriptive analyses, including frequency and percentage analysis.
- Inferential analyses. A series of one way analysis of variance (anova). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey's HSD were used to further analyse the significance of difference between SES groups at the 0.05 level.

All data is presented in Appendix 4.

A thematic analysis of the narratives, focus group discussions and interviews was also conducted. Exemplars of themes from the narratives and discussions will also be presented in the following sections.

3. Clarification of terms

3.1. Personal Interests

Analysis of interests in earlier chapters was with reference to specific careers, and was referred to as *career* interests (chapter 5, section 3.2). Personal interest in this chapter refers to the psychological construct, which describes an important aspect of a person's personality. Personal interests are patterns of likes, dislikes and indifferences around specific themes and directed toward certain kinds of *activities* rather than specific careers. In this sense personal interests are distinct from career interests. Ideally, personal interests ought to be linked to career interests. This chapter refers to five personal interest themes as follows:

- *Linguistic theme*: refers to the person's interest in using words attractively and effectively to communicate either in the written or spoken form.
- *Analytical-Logical theme*: refers to the attraction that activities such as analysis, reasoning, planning and calculating have for a person.
- *Spatial theme*: is linked to the person's interest in design, working with colours and shapes, drawing and sketching.
- *Interpersonal theme*: refers to an interest in understanding people and human behaviour.
- *Physical-Mechanical theme*: refers to an interest in working with machines and physically demanding activities.

These personal interest themes are loosely based on the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1983).

3.3. Career Awareness

This term refers to the knowledge a person has about the world of work. It includes accurate information about the eligibility to enter a certain occupation and knowledge about the duties and roles of a specific career.

4. Personal Interest Profiles

The Personal Interest Profile – PIP (Arulmani 2000, 2004) was used to examine participants' personal interests. This is a scale that is not focused on specific careers. It considers participants' interests for activities related to the five interest themes described above (section 3.1). The scale comprises 25 items with 5 items loading on each of the 5 themes. Items are anchored to a 5 point scale, where 1 indicates low interest and 5 the highest interest. Accordingly each interest theme can have a minimum score of 5 and a maximum score of 25. Higher scores indicate higher levels of interest.

4.1. Personal Interest profiles across the sample

The interest levels for all the five personal interest themes – Linguistic, Analytical-Logical, Spatial, Interpersonal and Physical- Mechanical, are approximately similar amongst the participants. Figure 3 below depicts the personal interest mean scores obtained by the sample across the five interest themes.

Figure 3: Mean interest scores (SD) for five interest themes, for the entire sample
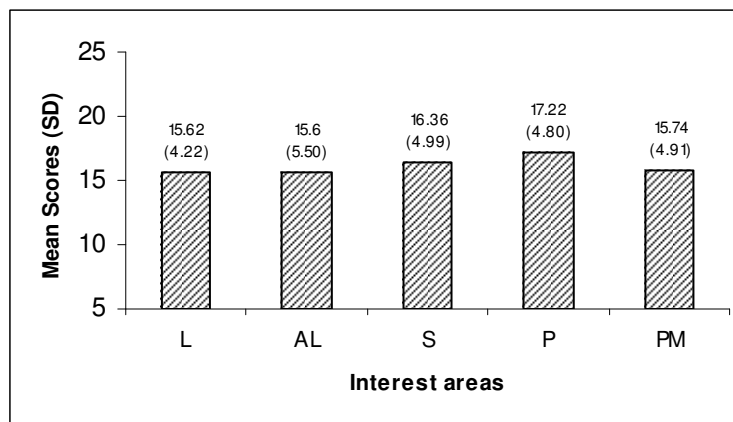
L = Linguistic; AL = Analytical-Logical; S = Spatial; P = Interpersonal; PM = Physical Mechanical

In other words, this sample does not show a particularly high or low interest for any one particular personal interest theme. This is the expected trend where we expect to see a clear spread of interest across a cross-section of young people. Importantly, this trend of a well spread out range of interests is also consistent across socio-economic status levels.

4.2. Variations in Career Preferences across regions

Data about *career* interest ratings obtained from the Career and Occupational Prestige Scale (COPS, Table 16, Chapter 6) was used to examine career preferences across 10 WORCC-IRS regions. Interesting variations were observed with participants rating certain careers as 'very interested' in certain regions. Six such careers with the most striking variations were examined more closely. Detailed information pertaining to the level of interest for these six careers is provided in Table 23 (Appendix 4). The series of figures below capture these variations in career preference across regions.

Figure 4: Variations in preferences for six careers across regions
1 = Shimoga; 2 = Bangalore; 3 = Dehradoon; 4 = Chennai; 5 = Ukrul; 6 = Goa; 7 = Delhi;
8 = Rampur; 9 = Srinagar; 10 = Guwahati
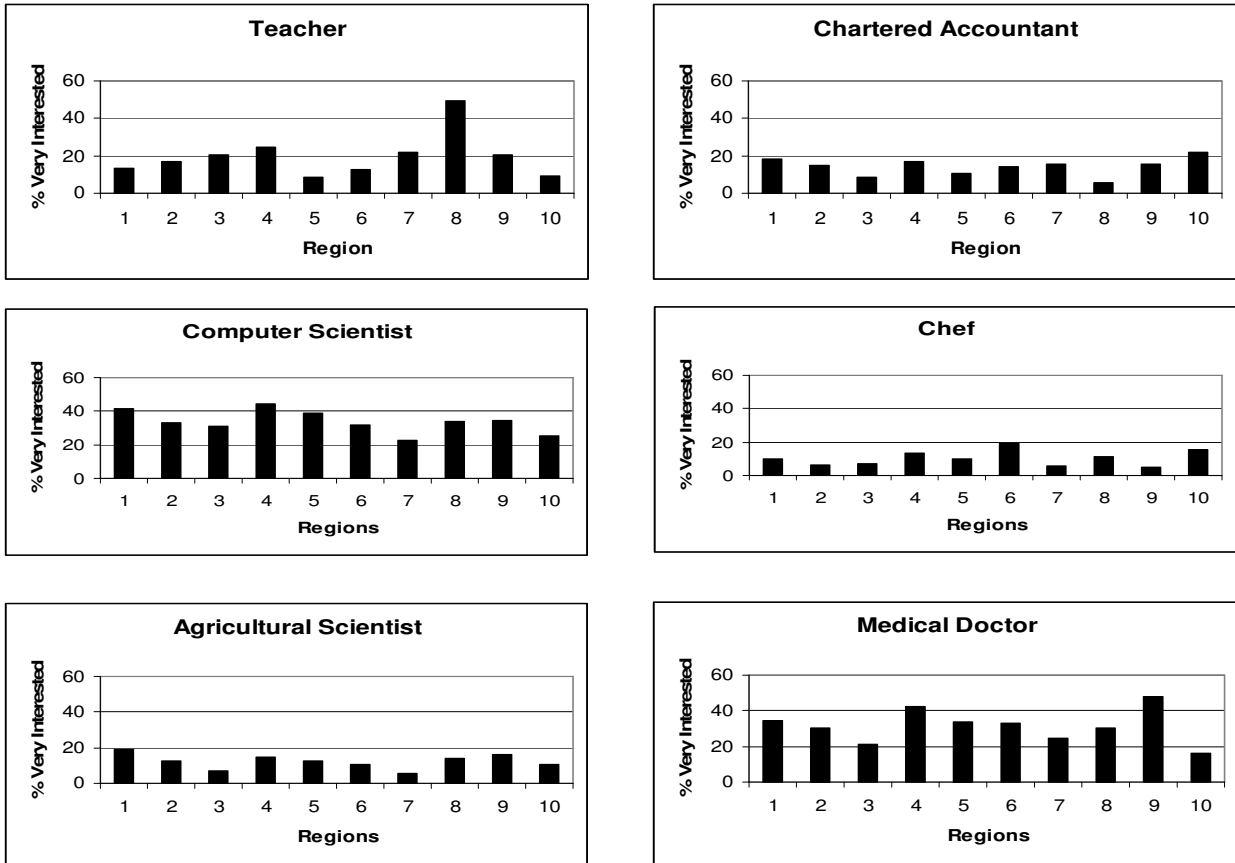
As indicated by the figures above, careers receive varying levels of interest ratings in the different regions of the study. *Teaching* for example attracts a markedly higher level of interest in Rampur, with close to 50% of the participants rating this occupation as 'very interested'. In contrast, only 9% of the Guwahati participants rate teaching at the same level. Instead, 22% of young people in Guwahati and 17.2% in Chennai rate *Chartered Accountancy* as 'very interested' while only 6% of Rampur participants feel the same way. *Computer Scientist* obtains a high rating across the entire sample with minor regional variations. An interesting regional influence is seen on *Chef.* Goan young people seem to go against the trend with 19% of them rating as 'very interested' for this career. In most of the other regions significantly lower numbers have given a positive rating. Shimoga gives the highest rating for Agricultural Scientist, with almost 20% of the young people in this region rating it as 'very interested'. Medical Doctor gets a high rating across all regions, but some areas indicate a particularly strong interest. Almost 50% of young people in the Srinagar sample and 43% of the Chennai sample place the highest interest on a career in medicine. Young people in the Guwahati sample however go against this trend with just 16% of them indicating high interest for this career area. Region-specific factors seem to influence career interests. Identification of the specific reasons underlying regional variations in career interests would require a deeper analysis

of the data. However, it is possible that being a Chef in Goa is more attractive given the strong tourism industry in this region. Similarly Agricultural Science may be more attractive in Shimoga given the culture of large scale farming prevailing in this region. The education sector is perhaps the largest employer around Rampur, especially with the recent drive for increased primary schools in this hill district.

The point to be noted is that attitudes and values prevailing within a region along with the type of job availability, could shape and influence career interests.

Regional variations are also seen in the nature of courses and study programmes available in certain regions.   Some of the participants indicated for example that they often chose a certain course of study merely because 'that is what is available' in the region. The issue of access to training opportunities requires urgent attention.

4.3. Personal Interests and Career Preferences

Interest profiles are designed on the hypothesis that certain kinds of occupations cluster around certain interest themes. Of course it is not likely that any one occupation would be exclusively related to a single interest theme. However it can be hypothesised with a reasonable amount of confidence that a given occupation would draw significantly from a certain interest area.

The association between *career* interest ratings on 28 different careers with *personal* ratings was further examined. Table 24 (Appendix 4) gives a summary of the associations. A statistically significant but small association was the predominant trend (correlations ranged between 0.1 and 0.3). This could indicate that the 'fit' between participants' personal interests and career preferences is not very strong. In other words, the *activities* that participants are interested in do not quite match the activities that their preferred careers would offer.

4.4. Salient trends

- The whole range of personal interests is seen across the sample.
- Regional variation is seen in preference for specific careers.
- The relationship between personal interests and career preferences is significant but weak.

5. Career interests and Career Awareness

The Career and Occupation Awareness Indicator – COAI (Arulmani, 2001) was used to assess participants' knowledge about 28 occupations. These are the same occupations for which the participants' career preferences were assessed (discussed in Section 4.3). The COAI requires the participants to:

a) Describe the career briefly and
b) Describe the qualifications needed to enter the career.

The quality of responses is scored from 0 to 3, where 0 indicates 'unable to describe the career' and 3 indicates 'good description of the career'. The consolidated score from the COAI provides a measure of the participant's career awareness. The maximum consolidated score a participant can obtain on this measure is 84. Individual scores on specific careers in the COAI indicate career awareness for that specific career.

The findings from this assessment are particularly revealing.

5.1. Knowledge and awareness of careers

The Mean consolidated career awareness score obtained by this sample is 13.21 (SD: 10.88). Given that the maximum score obtainable is 84, this is an exceptionally low Mean consolidated score, indicating a surprisingly low knowledge about the careers on the list.

The data was analysed further to look for patterns of knowledge for specific careers. It was expected that high career awareness would be demonstrated for careers which had high preference among the participants. To study this hypothesis the six careers with the highest interest ratings were selected, namely, Scientist, Computer Scientist, Engineer, Doctor, Teacher and Lawyer. Table 25 excerpts definitions given by a cross-section of participants for these careers.

Table 25: Participants' definitions for six 'high interest' careers: A sample

Scientist
• People who finds out secrets in the world.   *Girl, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Bangalore.*   • Person who invents, who study deeply on a particular object.   *Girl, Class 12, 17 years, upper middle SES, Cuncolim, Goa.*   • People who do physics very well.   *Boy, Class 12, 17 years, upper middle SES, Bangalore.*
Computer Scientist
• Computer scientist are those who make study on computer to research more information.   *Boy, Class 12, 18 years, upper middle SES, Cuncolim, Goa.*   • You can do after B.Com. Don't know what they do.   *Girl, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Bangalore*   • One who works in the biggest multinational companies and earns a big salary.   *Girl, Class 10, 14 years, upper middle   SES, Bangalore.*

Table 25: Definitions for six 'high interest' careers (Cont'd)

Engineer
• Engineer is a professional course in which one can succeed in anything. *Girl, Class 12, 17 years, upper middle SES, Cuncolim, Goa.* • One who plans houses. *Girl, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Bangalore.* • Expert in applied science specially in machines *Boy, Class 10, 15 years, middle SES, Guwahati.* • Engineer is the best career option because from engineering you can study anything else. *Boy, Class 10, 15 years, middle SES, Guwahati.*
Medical Doctor
• Saviour of citizens' health. *Girl, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Bangalore.* • This profession is very noble. *Boy, Class 12, 18 years, low SES, Ganderbal-Srinagar, Kashmir.* • Manufacturing medical items. *Girl, Class 10, 14 years, upper middle , Bangalore.* • This is most respectable profession. You can cure any illness and so people give you a high status and respect in society. To become a doctor you can study science or arts then study MD. *Boy, Class 10, 16 years, low SES, Chennai.*
Teacher
• Who shapes future citizens. *Girl, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Bangalore.* • Gives moral education to students. *Boy, Diploma Electrical Engineering, 17yrs, middle SES, Bhadravati, Karnataka* • Teacher: a respectable occupation. *Boy, Class 10, 16 years, low SES, Srinagar, Kashmir*
Lawyer
• Who argues for justice and injustice in the court. *Boy, Diploma Electrical Engineering, 17yrs, middle SES, Bhadravati, Karnataka* • Do social service by punishing the offenders. *Girl, Class 10, 15 years, low SES, Dhule, Maharashtra* • One who argues. *Girl, Class 10, 14 years, low SES, Bangalore*

These descriptions by students reveal varying levels of awareness about these careers. On the whole it seems that participants' knowledge of careers in which they show keen interest is at best general, broad and sweeping; and strongly influenced by prevailing prestige perceptions about these careers.

As indicated in Table 26 below, awareness for Computer Scientist and Engineer is extremely low. Scientist and Medical doctor is also low. There is some awareness about Lawyer and Teacher.

Table 26: Descriptive Summaries of Career Awareness Scores for six 'high interest' careers

Career	Mean Score (SD) *Max obtainable score = 3*
Scientist	0.64 (0.76)
Computer Scientist	0.31 (0.60)
Engineer	0.35 (0.60)
Medical Doctor	0.84 (0.87)
Teacher	1.09 (0.89)
Lawyer	0.97 (0.83)

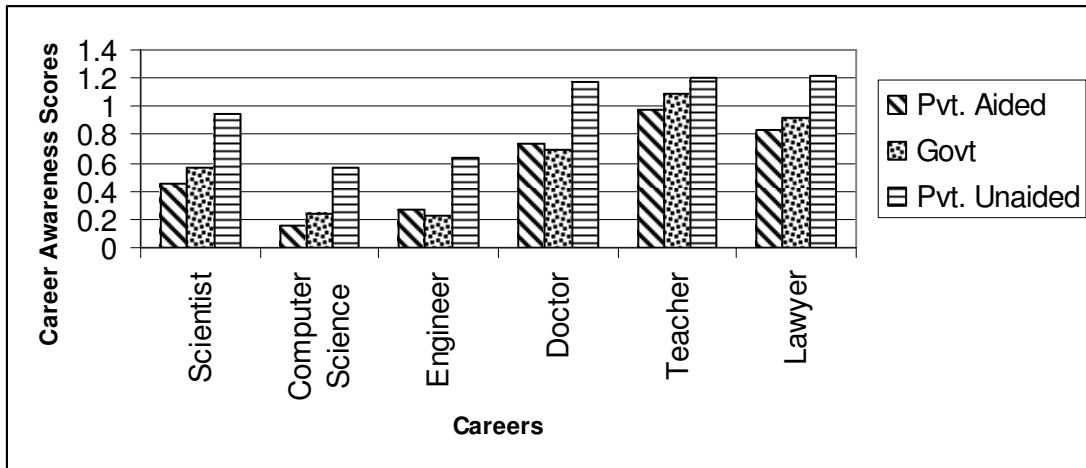Note*: Score of 0 -1 = low awareness, 1-2 = some awareness, 2 -3 = high awareness*

The data strongly suggests that although participants express high interest in a particular career, their knowledge about that career (e.g. qualifications required, knowledge about what people actually do in these careers, job responsibilities etc.), is extremely low. Interest in the career does not seem to guarantee increased awareness about the career. Computer Science is a particular case in point. This career has consistently been rated as most prestigious and most interesting by this sample. Yet, the awareness of what this career is about is the *lowest*.

These findings also have direct implications for how career choices are being made. The data suggests that career choices are being made against the background of extremely low career awareness and later chapters will look at this issue in more detail. In the next three sub-sections, an attempt will be made to identify the groups with the lowest career awareness.

5.2. School type and Career Awareness

The consolidated career awareness scores of participants in Government, Private Aided and Private Unaided schools were analysed. While career awareness was exceptionally low across all school types, significant differences are present between Government, Private Aided and Private Unaided schools (Table 27, Appendix 4). The lowest scores were in the Private Aided schools and the highest scores in the Private Unaided schools. Figure 5 below shows the difference across school types in specific career awareness for six 'high interest' careers.

Figure 5: Mean Career Awareness ratings for six 'high interest' careers, across Government, Private Aided and Private Unaided schools.

Note: *Score of 0 -1 = low awareness, 1-2 = some awareness, 2 -3 = high awareness*

Private Aided and Government schools lag behind the Private Unaided schools on career awareness in all six career areas.

5.3. School Board and Career Awareness

A similar trend of exceptionally low career awareness, including the 'high interest' careers is seen when the data is analysed across School Boards. Only institutions affiliated to the State Board and the CBSE have been analysed. State Board institutions were significantly lower than the CBSE schools (Table 28, Appendix 4). The ICSE Board was not entered in this analysis since the number of participants is low (212). However with the numbers available, the ICSE schools get a Mean Score of 20.89 (SD 11.28) and career awareness trends are similar to the CBSE schools.

It is important to note that the maximum obtainable score on this scale at 84 and the obtained scores range between the 10 to 25 points. This indicates a level of career awareness across all school boards to be exceptionally low.

5.4. Class level and Career Awareness

It is expected that as the young person advances from Secondary to Higher secondary levels of education, he or she would gain wider exposure to the world of work. Should this be true, it may be expected that career awareness would also increase. The data was examined by sorting it according to class type namely, Class 10, Class 12 and the 2nd year Vocational group.

Students in class 10 and the 2nd year in the Vocational group are at a similar level of career awareness, with the Class 12 participants being significantly higher in the career awareness scores (Table 29, Appendix 4). However it must be noted that against the

maximum obtainable score of 84 on this measure, the scores obtained even by Class 12 participants is very low.

5.5. Salient trends

- Knowledge about careers is extremely low across the entire sample irrespective of educational level, school type or school board.
- Interest in a career does not seem to be based on adequate knowledge about that career.
- Students in private unaided schools seem to have higher career awareness when compared with their counterparts in government and private aided schools.
- Participants in schools following the CBSE Board demonstrate higher career awareness than those in State Board schools.
- Participants in Class 12 show a higher level of career awareness than those in Class 10 and the 2nd year in vocational courses.

6. Consolidation of key findings

6.1. Personal interests vs. career preferences

It was noted first of all that personal interests across five different interest themes were spread more or less evenly across the sample. No one interest area was significantly stronger or weaker than the others.

It is expected that personal interests would reflect in career preferences. In other words, it is expected that a person who indicates a high interest for Linguistic type of activities would also be interested in a career such as Journalism, while someone with a high Spatial interest would show preference for the work activities of an Architect, an Artisan and so on. While these relationships between personal interest and career preference are present within the sample, they are at best feeble. It seems possible that factors other than personal interests influence career preferences.

A further indication of the apparently tenuous connection between personal interest and career preference emerges from an analysis of the data across regions. Prevailing customs, attitudes toward occupations, job availability, course availability and such factors seem to influence career preferences in specific regions. The tourism culture of Goa for example, pushes the interest for a career as a Chef to a higher level. Agriculture receives a high rating in Shimoga which is a land of large scale farming. Influences such as these are examples of how *locally* emerging influences and opportunities shape attitudes and orientations to career preferences, perhaps bypassing personal interests.

6.2. Preparation to enter the world of work

Learning about oneself, one's interests and talents and learning about the world of work are important components of preparing to make career choices. Awareness about personal interests and talents along with knowledge about the world of work are in effect the building blocks of making informed career choices. WORCC-IRS reveals that the young person at the verge of making important career decisions is equipped with little information about careers that are manifestly of 'high interest'. More importantly, the kind of *activities* that the young person is interested in does not seem to reflect in his or her career preferences. Varieties of other forces seem to push individuals toward or away from career opportunities, and the young person seems to have little self-awareness of how personal interests get marginalised in the process. This places the young people at risk to entering a career that may not be in line with personal interests.

It is alarming to note that career awareness is extremely low amongst this sample. Young people show strong interests for careers they know very little about. A strident case in point is Computer Science, which has received the *highest* ratings of interest and prestige across the entire sample, irrespective of age, gender, region or SES. Yet, participants' knowledge of what this career is really all about, or even accurate information about career paths leading to this career, is the *lowest*. Similar trends of low career awareness were noted for all the other careers examined. Minimal increments in career awareness are seen at the Class 12 level and amongst those in Private Unaided schools. But on the whole knowledge about the world of work is disturbingly low.

It seems therefore that the young people in this sample, at the very threshold of making critical career development commitments, are doing so with low knowledge about self and about the world of work. In effect career choices are being made even when the young person in unprepared to make these decisions.

7. Labour Market vs. Educational leadership: Implications and discussion points

7.1. Uninformed choices: Implications for higher education and the labour market

This chapter has discussed two important points that have emerged from the WORCC-IRS data. First of all, the data indicates that the linkages between personal interests and career preferences are at best tenuous. Secondly, knowledge and awareness of careers amongst young people seems to be extremely low.

Young people in this study are at the point of making decisions about further education that points them toward certain career paths. Inaccurate decisions at this point have implications for the rest of the individual's career progress. Going by participants' responses it seems strongly likely that career choices are being made against the backdrop of poor self-knowledge and low career awareness. Educational leadership at the school and higher secondary level in preparing students for the transition from one

level of education into another is weak and young people are at high risk for making uninformed career choices.

Poorly informed choices made at the high school and higher secondary level could have a cascading effect seen in the short run on the outcomes of higher education. The perhaps even more serious impact of ineffective career choices would be seen in the quality of the nation's workforce. The consequences of entering a certain course of study could belatedly dawn upon the young person *after* he or she has entered the course. In some cases this may lead to dropping out of further education. In other situations the family may be able to afford an expensive alternation in the young person's career preparation and the individual may begin a new course all over again. In families where resources are limited, course completion could be reduced to assiduously 'completing what one has started'. It is true that such situations are not always the case. Yet, the numbers of young people who do express dissatisfaction with career choices is increasing to alarmingly high levels. It is often said that an important function of further education is to prepare the young person for the labour market by equipping the individual with knowledge and skills. A vital point that is often missed is that knowledge and skills for a set of occupational tasks that are not in some way linked with the individual's interests would be sterile, bereft of motivation or a sense of meaning and purpose.

7.2. Uneven workforce development

The WORCC-IRS seems to indicate that in the absence of strong educational leadership, career preferences are strongly influenced by the trends and cycles of the labour market. For example, the demand for vocationally trained, skilled workers has grown in geometric proportions in the Indian context. In an attempt to provide a wider range of career options for the young career aspirant, the Government in its various National Policies on Education has introduced the option of vocational education. The objective of this scheme was to sharpen the employability of an individual, reduce mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and provide employment oriented alternatives for those who pursue higher education without particular interest or direction. Assessments of this effort (e.g. Desai & Whiteside, 2000) have revealed that the number of individuals opting for vocational training is few and the majority of those who did take this option were from lower income groups. An opposite trend is noted with regard to other career areas. For example the prestige-linked preoccupations of the Indian family has created an unrealistically heightened demand for courses such as engineering and medicine. Chapters 5 and 6 have discussed this point in greater detail. These opposing trends result in an uneven development of the workforce, with large numbers of qualified professionals available for certain careers and not enough in other areas.

It is essential that governments scientifically monitor manpower requirements and plan decades ahead to meet emerging needs. This requires close interactions between the educational system and manpower planners so that courses and training programmes are structured in advance, to meet emerging needs. In purely economic terms, gaps in this planning could lead to manpower mismatches. From the point of view of personal growth and development, the preponderance of certain kinds of courses at the expense of other avenues for training could restrict the flowering of the great variety of talents

present within every individual. However as we have seen, social and cultural forces could thwart the best thought out plans for career development. This is an ever-present reality in India.

7.3. Boom, bust and suitability

In the absence of services that enhance skills for career preparation, career choices could be linked with occupations that are sometimes merely artefacts of economic cycles. In response to the present boom in the computer science industry large numbers of students have developed an interest in this career. The WORCC-IRS data indicates that in some areas, more than half of the sample shows the highest interest in computer science. It is a fact that the computer industry offers a wide range of occupational possibilities. But young people's interest in this field does not seem to be matched by accurate knowledge about the occupations within this area. Interest instead seems to be strongly influenced by the much publicised trappings of working in a large information technology firm. For example, jobs emerging from the information technology enabled services (ITES) such as those offered by the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector are commonly misunderstood by large numbers to be a career in the computer science sector. Meanwhile, there are the increasingly discordant reports of the frustration, disillusionment and psychological discomfort experienced by ill-informed young people who have entered this sector. This evidence points to the strong likelihood that those who experience the highest levels of discomfort seem to be the least suited for a 'BPO job'.

The same principle holds good for all other career areas. An individual has the highest chances of finding success through a career for which he or she has the strongest personal interest and aptitude. Not everyone's personal interests and aptitudes would match the requirements of careers emerging from a boom sector. In a context where educational leadership is strong, the young person would be prepared to make the transition to further education and livelihood training that is congruent with his or her personality. When such leadership is weak or absent, the young person could fall a victim to the short-term human resource requirements emerging from the labour market.

7.4. Education for skill literacy

The longest lag periods between qualifying for a career and actually entering a career seem to be closely linked to the nature of the career aspirant's career preparation. The longest delays are associated with the *lack of skill literacy* in the career aspirant. 'Skill' in this sense is not limited to the dexterity with which a person handles equipment and tools. Skill literacy is the fluency that a person develops for the practice and application of the theoretical concepts that comprise a body of knowledge. Even a highly theoretical field of study requires a set of skills with which to actually interact with the constructs of that field. A historian for example requires skills for referencing and research, just as a mechanical engineer needs to be skilled at understanding how machines work or a psychologist needs skills to listen with empathy.

A student who has moved from one degree course to a higher one without the actual development of skills, is an unattractive prospect in the employment market place. The difficulties with job acquisition that this person experiences is not always because there are no opportunities. Quite often it is because such a person is *inadequately prepared* for the market place. On the other hand someone who presents herself with even just a bachelor's degree *along with* evidence for skills to *apply* and *practice* the subject in which she has specialised, is likely to experience a shorter lag between her qualifying and obtaining a job. This is because she has developed a higher level of skill literacy for the subject that she has studied.

Most commonly, our university courses enhance students' knowledge of a subject, but fail to enhance their literacy for the skills that are necessary for the application of this knowledge. Presumably, 'professional' degree courses are so named because they are designed to equip the student with skills for a career. In reality however, a large number of professional degrees continue to remain theoretical and do not enhance the student's skill literacy. The student is therefore required to go on for higher and higher levels of specialisation, incurring increasing expenses. Non-professional degrees are further removed from the realities of the world of work and contribute even less to the enhancement of skill literacy. Poor quality education can only result in a labour force that is populated by poorly trained, poorly skilled young people whose skills do not match their qualifications.

The most urgent need presented by the world of work is for *skilled* manpower. Quite often the onus for work skills training falls on the world of work. Indian employers often express their frustration with the employability of fresh graduates and most are resigned to the reality that the training requirements of fresh recruits are not limited merely to orientating them to a given work environment. In reality, training must begin from the basics. If the need for skilled manpower is to be effectively met by the systems that educate young people for employment, significant changes in curricular structure are called for. On the background of the apparent failure of vocational courses to evoke adequate interest among large numbers of students, the development of courses that blend the curricular objectives of degree programmes with diploma courses could offer an effective solution. The idea of skill literacy offers a valuable touchstone that could guide the redesigning of existing curricula.

7.5. *Educational systems and labour market forces: Is a dynamic partnership possible?*

The obvious answer to this question is an unequivocal 'yes'. The reality however seems to be quite different. At the high school and higher secondary stage, educational systems seem to be failing at the level of facilitating *informed* career choices. This failure seems to continue into higher education, with *poorly skilled* young people entering the labour market in spite of years of study. While these drawbacks are well known, it is the more recent trend of educational systems coming under the control of labour market forces that is alarming. On the one hand it is commendable that universities are designing and mooting 'job-oriented courses'. On the other hand, subjects that are not immediately job

oriented seem to be accorded an increasingly low priority. The pure sciences for example and subjects in the humanities receive decreasing support and in many cases, departments are in danger of being closed down.

While it is true that India is at last beginning to show sustained economic growth it must be remembered that education is not the handmaiden of the labour market. The purpose of education is not merely to prepare a qualified work force. Instead, the purpose of education is to facilitate individual's development as a person and as a responsible and contributing member of the society of which he or she is a part.

7.6. Life long learning

Around the world, workers and young workers-to-be, face a new horizon. Contemporary society is described to be post-industrial and career and work have taken on new meanings. Education-work-retirement has been the traditional approach to the unfolding of a significant portion of an individual's life. The future world of work is no longer likely to offer jobs that could be pursued for the entire span of an individual's working life. The worker of the future is likely to be required to make several job shifts over one life time. This could be the result of skills becoming rapidly redundant or because the new world of work offers ever increasing opportunities for greater self-fulfilment. Career success is going to be dependent on the constant updating of knowledge and skills. Within this context, learning must perforce be redefined. Careers in the future world of work require broad learning foundations that leave the option open for ongoing learning and skill development. Two suggestions made by career psychologists are of particular relevance to the Indian situation. First of all, it is essential that educational systems reduce their focus on curricula that lead to closed specialisation paths (Tractenberg, Streumer Jan, & Van Zolingen, 2002). In other words training courses with long periods of gestation leading ultimately to just one career possibility are likely to decrease in their relevance. Educational foundations that offer the flexibility for career change over the course of one's life are the need of the hour. This requires a closing of the gap between knowledge transmission and skill acquisition. Embedding work-related experiences in the school curriculum for example could contribute to the closing of this gap (Nijhof, 1998). At the second level, employers also will need to devise strategies and methodologies that could contribute to the ongoing knowledge and skill development of their work force. A work environment where on going learning becomes an essential aspect of career development is expected to be the work ethic of the future (Nijhof, 1998).

If life long learning is to be possible, it is essential that mindsets also change to accept this reality. Social-cognitive environments that do not allow the worker to remain a learner could prove to be barriers to career success in the emerging post-industrial world of work.

8. The relevance of career counselling

Trends in the labour market are a powerful influence on career development. The career counsellor is required to be aware of manpower requirements and labour market trends. However, effective counselling is not chained to economic cycles. It is the personhood of the career chooser that lies at the heart of career counselling. Facilitating self-understanding, matching this information with the world of work and helping the young person make a career discovery is the real task before the sensitive counsellor.
An individual possesses talents for more than one career. If this is not acknowledged, the large numbers of career aspirants (the majority perhaps) whose interest and aptitude profiles do not match prevailing demands from the labour market, may not find their place in the sun. Instead they may be impelled to choose careers that are popular – forsaking careers for which they might have a higher suitability. Being equipped with the methodology to strike this essential balance is the hallmark of effective career counselling.

Career counselling could in effect be the *bridge* between education and the labour market.

A well planned career counselling programme for the high school and higher secondary level could contribute significantly enhancing knowledge about self and the world of work and thereby help the young person prepare effectively for the world of work. Towards this end, a fully functioning career counselling programme within an educational institution for example, could systematically create opportunities for work shadowing, internships and work experience. Further, an important target for career counselling is to enhance the individual's awareness of manpower requirements and indicators from the labour market. Career counselling could help the career aspirant learn to examine the labour market, assess the short- and long-term consequences of particular types of occupational choices and make informed career choices. Within this context, it is essential that a high priority is given to the development of accurate and comprehensive information on education and training opportunities and on the labour market.

Another linked, though distinctly separate issue is to do with unemployment. Interventions targeting unemployment have largely focused on those who are *already* unemployed. These interventions mainly take an economic approach and address the problem in a cross-sectional manner. Very few attempts have been directed toward the *prevention* of unemployment. Cross-sectional and 'curative' approaches would at best alleviate the problems of those who are currently unemployed. Career counselling that begins early in the individual's life could contribute to preventing unemployment by teaching skills with which to navigate through the ups and downs of labour market cycles.

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Please refer to
PART 2
for the rest of this report