



ENABLING YOUNG ADULTS TO LEAD THEIR JOURNEY TOWARDS EMPLOYABILITY

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Preface

The **New Education Policy 2020 (NEP)** in a path-breaking move seeks to embed a multi-disciplinary approach to education right from higher secondary (9th standard). As per the policy vision, students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school so that they can design their own paths of study and life plans. Given the wide choice of educational and correspondingly career pathways that would now open up for students, educational and career guidance assumes critical importance to enable students to navigate this maze of options.

Although several policy initiatives have been undertaken in India to embed career guidance and counselling services in the secondary education system, corresponding on ground implementation has, however, been lacking when compared to the massive requirement of such services. Over 90% of the schools are estimated to lack professional career counselling services.

This white paper tries to establish the need and efficacy of introducing career counselling in schools in the backdrop of the factors and concerns driving the career aspirations of youth. The white paper lays forth the results of implementation of one such career guidance program presently being run across municipal schools in Mumbai, Pune and Udaipur and its impact on widening the educational and career choices of the students. It is expected that the insights gained from this project could in some ways contribute towards catalysing the institution of such services across the education system.

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Abbreviations

Executive Summary

Research shows that career education and exploration have a positive impact on students staying in school and finding relevance in connecting their school work to their future work. Career education offers students the opportunity to explore those important lifelong skills of problems solving, teamwork and effective communication, while integrating this learning into classroom curriculum and outside the school, providing authentic learning opportunities. Results of this integration of academics with career education include more course completions, higher graduation rates and higher levels of student motivation (Castellano, 2014). Career Guidance came to be seriously acknowledged to contribute to the greater good after a series of overlapping reviews undertaken by the international institutions that included OECD, the World Bank among others during the beginning of the new millennium.

Having recognized the criticality of career guidance in influencing educational/vocational outcomes as well as the present state of the inadequate career guidance interventions for the school going youth, the Government both at national and state level has taken several steps to remedy this situation. The **New Education Policy 2020 (NEP)**, clearly highlights the need for career counselling both as a means to enhancing learning experience as well as facilitating a smoother transition to higher education.

Despite, clear recognition of the importance of career counselling by the policy framework in India, the country is still perceived as a counselling deficit sector where over 90% of the schools do not have a professional career counsellor. India needs at least 1.4 million career counselors to maintain a globally acceptable student-to-school-counselor ratio. The ASER 2017 report also emphasises the fact that although 60% of youth in the age group 14 to 18 years want to continue education beyond XII standard, they lack direction or information to pursue non-traditional career paths.

Thus, the present state of affairs of India's education system, particularly in reference to its ability to cater to the student requirement of an effective career counselling system, clearly highlights the pressing need to ramp up the counselling infrastructure in schools so as to bridge the gap between education and employment. This, especially assumes critical importance in the backdrop of the vision adopted by the NEP in terms of introducing a multi-disciplinary approach to education right from secondary school. As per the policy vision, students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school so that they can design their own paths of study and life plans. Given the wide choice and combination of educational and correspondingly career pathways that will now be thrown open to the students, educational and career guidance assumes paramount

importance to enable students to navigate the maze of options. Thus, fortifying the career counselling infrastructure at all levels of our education system has become need of the hour to enable effective and meaningful implementation of the NEP, especially given the extremely low level of penetration of such services. Not only would it ensure a more productively engaged youth in employment as effective career guidance would ensure appropriate channelising of skills, but it would also bolster labour market outcomes through a more equitable distribution of labour force.

Antarang Foundation's experience in the field of career counselling also substantiates this understanding. Since inception in 2012, Antarang has counselled over 80000 students through its career guidance program CareerAware. Independent evaluation of Antarang's CareerAware program has helped establish the belief that career guidance has a positive impact on ability of students to identify and articulate their professional aspirations. It also helps in a more appropriate choice of educational pathway in alignment with career goals.

I. Background

A. India Education Overview

Most countries, including India have made schooling until age 14 mandatory. The New Education Policy 2020 has infact extended the right to education in India upto 17 years of age (12th standard). Over the years, India has successfully managed to achieve a 99.2% enrolment rate for primary education (ESAG, 2018). However, like many countries facing rapid population growth coupled with rapid industrialization and economic growth, India has struggled to keep children in school past age 14, as is evident from the dropping gross enrolment ratios in the higher standards of education. While the gross enrolment ratio in higher secondary (standards XI-XII) stood at 56.2% (ESAG, 2018), the enrolment ratio beyond XII standard (18-23 years) stands at a dismal 26.3% (AISHE, 2019).

Examining the reasons why students drop out, (Willis, 1986) discusses the following correlates of educational risk: family structure and poverty, race and ethnicity, language, residence, economic displacement, and gender. In view of the risk factors, then, the key to reducing the dropout rate is helping youth to overcome their sense of disconnection. Miller and Imel, 1987 attest that students with low motivation to attend school have shown improvement in school attendance and retention after participating in career education and that vocational students who have participated in career education are more likely to complete the vocational program they have selected

B. Literature – Importance of Career Guidance

In order to ensure youth are empowered and able to pursue a career they are interested in and that uses their skills and abilities, it is important that they receive guidance and information at an early age. Without information it is impossible to make a choice or find direction in looking for employment.

Research shows that career education and exploration have a positive impact on students staying in school and finding relevance in connecting their school work to their future work. Career education offers students the opportunity to explore those important lifelong skills of problems solving, teamwork and effective communication, while integrating this learning into classroom curriculum and outside the school, providing authentic learning opportunities. Results of this integration of academics with career education include more course completions, higher graduation rates and higher levels of student motivation (Castellano, 2014).

Studies also show that students need to be exposed to career interests and exploration at an early age. By eighth grade, many students have career and occupational interests. These areas of interest are developed through exposure to activities and learning opportunities in a

wide variety of career areas, and researchers agree that interests are developed as a result of experiences. (ACT, Inc, 2005).

Magnusson and Starr (2000) analyze child development and career development theories. From these they derive 5 premises and conclude that because habits and skills become important in career planning and development, life planning (and career planning) should start early. Amongst the premises, they also emphasize that it is important for individuals to understand own strengths, skills aptitudes, interests and preferences. If they are unable to do the aforementioned, life planning and career planning becomes difficult – jobs (or careers) require specific skills, and in order to develop these skills one must understand strength and weaknesses. However, in order to develop skills one must also have goals. In this case career goals can be met by starting planning early if one needs to pursue higher education, vocational training, or apply for jobs directly out of school.

Career Guidance came to be seriously acknowledged to contribute to the greater good after a series of overlapping reviews undertaken by the international institutions that included OECD (2004), the World Bank (2004) among others during the beginning of the new millennium. It has been claimed that not only does the career guidance facilitate and ease the transition into an independent and dignified life for individuals existing on the margins (from vulnerable groups) of the society but it also enhances prosperity and supports sustainable employment by “ensuring a better match between the supply and demand of skills, by socializing and preparing citizens for flexible engagement with the world of work, and striking a balance between fulfilling personal aspirations and contributing to broader economic goals”(Sultana, R.G. (2014)).

The policy rationales for attention to career guidance as a public good as well as a private good fall into three main categories (Watts, A.G. OECD, 2009):

Learning goals, including improving the efficiency of the education and training system and managing its interface with the labour market. If individuals make decisions about what they are to learn in a well-informed and well-thought-through way, linked to their interests, their capacities and their aspirations, investments in education and training systems are likely to yield higher returns.

Labour market goals, including improving the match between supply and demand and managing adjustments to change. If people find jobs which utilise their potential and meet their own goals, they are likely to be more motivated and therefore more productive.

Social equity goals, including supporting equal opportunities and promoting social inclusion. Career guidance services can raise the aspirations of disadvantaged groups and support them in gaining access to opportunities that might otherwise have been denied to them.

C. Career Guidance Indian context

Policy Framework

Having recognized the criticality of career guidance in influencing educational/vocational outcomes as well as the present state of the inadequate career guidance interventions for the school going youth, the Government both at national and state level has taken several steps to remedy this situation. The **New Education Policy 2020**, clearly highlights the need for career counselling both as a means to enhancing learning experience as well as facilitating a smoother transition to higher education. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has already taken steps in ensuring that career guidance is a priority within the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) scheme. RMSA an important initiative of Government of India that is committed to Universalize Secondary Education (USE) at Secondary and Higher Secondary stage, lays a strong emphasis on guidance and counseling as one of the important areas to achieve the goals of USE. The **RMSA** framework suggests “career guidance can help in promoting students’ retention and better scholastic performance in curricular areas, facilitating adjustment and career development of students, developing right attitudes towards studies, self, work and others.” The framework points out the need for every school to have at least one teacher and preferably two (one male and one female) teacher trained in guidance and counselling, and to make guidance and counselling an essential part of in-service training programme for teachers and principals/ vice principals. Finally, every State Department of Education/State Bureau of Guidance is expected to ensure creating a cadre of trained guidance personnel as Guidance Officers. Besides, several states such as Delhi, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Gujarat, Rajasthan etc. have implemented career guidance solutions in schools.

Career Counselling Infrastructure – a bottleneck

Despite, clear recognition of the importance of career counselling by the policy framework in India, the country is still perceived as a counselling deficit sector where over 90% of the schools do not have a professional career counsellor. A Mindler survey on career awareness amongst students in the 14-21 age group revealed that 93% of the students surveyed were aware of just seven career options although more than 250 career options are available in India (Ghosh, 2019).

The 2018 Annual International Career and College Counseling (IC3) Conference acknowledged that India's 350 million students, the biggest student population in the world, need at least 1.4 million career counselors to maintain a globally acceptable student-to-school-counselor ratio (Business Standard, 2018). In comparison, the US has about 2.6 million student counsellors for 56 million students (Koshi, 2019).

Further, the ASER 2017 report also goes on to state that although 60% of youth in the age group 14 to 18 years want to continue education beyond XII standard, they lacked direction or information to pursue non-traditional career paths. Professional aspirations are clearly gendered, with males aiming to join the army or police or becoming engineers and females showing preference for teaching or nursing careers. Almost a third of the youth who were currently not enrolled in an educational institution did not have a specific occupation that they aspired to. Finally, 40% youth did not have any role models for the profession they aspired to. (ASER, 2017).

Thus, the present state of affairs of India's education system, particularly in reference to its ability to cater to the student requirement of an effective career counselling system, clearly highlights the pressing need to ramp up the counselling infrastructure in schools so as to bridge the gap between education and employment.

II. Antarang Foundation's experience in career guidance and counselling

A. What drives student aspirations?

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has reported India's NEET indicator, a measure of the population that is in neither employment, education, nor training, as 30.4% in 2018. According to the PLFS 2018-19, the unemployment rate among the urban male youth stood at 18.7 per cent in 2017-18 while the unemployment rate for urban female youth stood at 25.7 per cent. This is substantially higher than the national average unemployment rate of 5.8 per cent. India's large youth population represents a significant demographic dividend, whose potential is going untapped.

There are multiple challenges plaguing the employment ecosystem emanating from low level of education, high dropout rates and mis-match between supply of skills and demands. One of the most important challenges, often overlooked, is the misalignment between career ambitions of the youth and opportunities available in the job markets (Paliath, 2019). Thus, besides the apparent disconnect between what the industry expects from an employable youth and insufficiency of the present educational and skilling ecosystem to prepare the youth for

the job market, the problem of unemployment is also accentuated by a largely demand driven approach to solving the unemployability issue. Much of the present-day measures undertaken to mitigate the unemployment problem, are designed to address the industry needs and are generally not woven around addressing youth aspirations. This unilateral approach to solving the unemployment problem has resulted in compartmentalizing youth to fit into set job moulds which in turn can result in an unengaged youth workforce, especially for youth from the bottom of the pyramid.

It is imperative in today's context that any strategy to accelerate employment, must take into account the aspirations of the youth and find innovative solutions to match ambitions and skill sets with job markets.

While studies about youth aspirations have been conducted for an urban context (Mishra et al, 2018) little to no information is available about the aspirations of youth hailing from the urban poor sections. What are their dreams and aspirations? What are the factors that influence career choices? What obstacles are they facing in their pursuit of a career of choice?

To answer some of these questions Antarang Foundation, has in the past conducted dip stick surveys with youth in the 14-18 years age bracket. *These surveys, which have been conducted at different points in time, have been executed with multiple objectives in mind such as - gaining insights into the dreams and aspirations of the youth belonging to low-income backgrounds, understanding influencers and barriers to transitioning into higher education and employment, understanding the relevance and utility of career guidance as perceived by youth etc.* Findings of some of these surveys are elucidated below:

(i) The **first** exercise was a survey conducted by Antarang in June-July 2018 with students who had just received their tenth standard results. The survey was done in two parts – in the first part close to 400 students were surveyed across municipal schools in Mumbai to understand the driving factors supporting their career aspirations. Our findings from the survey indicated:

- a) Close to 30% of the students stated that they did not have any career aspiration
- b) Although close to 70% of the students stated that they had a career aspiration, they did not seem to have knowledge about the educational pathways to reach the same. While it was found that a large number of students did know which stream (Arts/Science/Commerce) was possibly the correct choice in line with their choice of career aspiration (since most careers needed fairly generic choices), what was important to note is that they lacked clarity on the next steps (specific courses) that they would need to pursue their career aspirations.

c) When asked to list the factors that influenced their career choices, approximately 57% stated that they were guided by their interests, while 29% of the student respondents stated that they were guided by their family.

As majority of the students had stated that the chief driver of their career choice was their “interest” in a particular field, Antarang supplemented its survey findings with a focussed group discussion conducted with seven students from low income private/municipal schools in Mumbai, in order to gain a more in-depth clarity on what were the factors that helped students crystalise this “career interest”. Our findings from the focussed group discussion made us to understand that student’s “interest” in a career pathway was influenced to a great extent by their family members or their peers. Generally, students appeared to make career choices which were in line with career choices already made by one of their family members or friends as these were the careers to which they could most relate to, eg a girl respondent wanted to take up a career in Beauty and Wellness as her aunt was already in that business, a male respondent wanted to take up a career in banking as his brother was already working in a bank, a third respondent wanted to be a teacher since she stated that her teachers were the biggest professional influencers in her life. Thus, career choices of students were very often limited and predisposed by their immediate line of influencers which included family, friends or teachers as students did not have access to adequate career guidance and exploration.

(ii) The **second** survey was conducted by Antarang in May 2019 with a sample of 20 students residing in slums of Mumbai (Ghatkoper and Chandivali). Study was primarily qualitative in nature - detailed focus group discussions were conducted in groups of 3-4 students. Of these 20 students, 9 were pursuing graduation, 7 had just completed 12th standard and 4 had dropped out of the education system. Some findings of this exercise are given below:

Youth hailing from Urban poor contexts were overwhelmed by the looming crisis of unemployment and slow growth

The study found that the fear of unemployment is a tangible threat for the under privileged youth. Most respondents shared that media reports of slow job growth coupled with real-life experiences of friends and relatives’ struggling to find jobs are the primary reasons for this concern. In addition to this are challenges like little to no awareness of possible career avenues, half-baked understanding of what a work life or career entails and the lack of resources to overcome financial and cultural obstacles.

Youth have limited understanding and awareness about career options and intrinsic skillsets

It was found that the respondents had a very limited understanding of different sectors and profiles in which they could explore career avenues. Most of the respondents stated they wish to pursue 'office jobs' which signified working in an office environment, on a computer and receiving a fixed monthly remuneration. However, upon probing it was revealed that apart from a few profiles like sales and marketing, most were not aware of what kind of roles they could pursue or what those profiles entail. For e.g. respondent 1 stated that he wanted to work in a bank, however did not have an idea of the different functions within a bank and hence did not know which roles he wanted to pursue. Most respondents were also not aware of their abilities and skill sets or what kind of profiles can suit their interests.

'Aspiration' for the youth was closely linked with 'feasibility'

The study found that for the youth interviewed, the decision to pursue (or not pursue) a stream of career was made based on two key parameters:

The first criterion is how 'aspirational' they found the job to be. This was not only dependent on how engaging or interesting they found the job to be, but also how "respectable" they found a job to be. 'Respectable jobs' are the ones which garner a certain degree of admiration and approval from their peers, parents and society in general.

The second criteria, which was often only subtly talked about, was how 'feasible' or practical it was to pursue a career in a particular field. This was judged based on multiple factors like access to financial resources and technical/functional skills and acumen needed to excel in the field.

Few girls wanted to chase unconventional careers, most wanted to pursue gender typical job profiles

Most girls interviewed were quick to point out the very perceptible discrimination and obstacles faced in their journeys of pursuing a career. While most of them were pursuing their graduation and wished to work in full-time careers, they shared that cultural and social barriers often restricted the nature of jobs they wish to pursue. As a result, 4 of the 10 girls interviewed expressed interest to be a teacher, which is considered to be a 'decent profession' with flexible timings and is a family-approved choice of profession. Few others wished to work in jobs in an office environment which was close to home and has fixed timings.

Interestingly, few girls expressed desire to pursue unconventional careers like joining army or police force, pursuing civil services to become an IPS etc.

Internet and social media enabled role-models motivating youth to dream big

The study found that access to information through internet and social media due to availability of low-cost data was a great equalizer which was earlier only within the reach of their more affluent, privileged counterparts. For a few respondents who did not have any role models in their immediate circle of family and friends, Internet and social media had bridged the gap and provided access to positive influencers.

About 1/3rd of the respondents shared that they follow inspiring and motivational public figures on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Youtube. For e.g. one of the respondent followed entrepreneurs and self-made businessmen on Youtube and had dreams of starting his own business. Another respondent shared that she looked up to a friend who has her own Youtube channel where she pursues her passion for singing, song-writing and playing instruments..

However, while it enabled them to have role models and dream of various possibilities, when probed, a dichotomy was observed as these respondents did not have access to resources to follow the paths of these virtual-life role models. Therefore, the internal conflict between the reality of their grim situations and their dreams were apparent.

(iii) The **third** survey was conducted by Antarang in November 2020 with close to 300 youth across various socio-economic backgrounds and age groups, i.e school students (government schools, Goa), undergraduates (studying in Mumbai colleges) and working individuals to understand their need and expectations from a career guidance tool which could be self-administered by them independently. This was followed by focussed group discussion with 14 students from colleges and about 20 students studying in government schools. Amongst the various questions posed to the participants, they were also asked to elaborate on their present-day career related concerns. Quotes of some of the students from these discussions given below clearly highlights the pressing need of setting up an effective career counselling infrastructure as part of the educational setup at all levels:

Quotes from students studying in higher secondary schools in Goa:

“Ma’am we are good at many things but many of the times we are confused where actually we have to go”

“How do I solve confusion about further studies”

“I am preparing for engineering, what will happen if I fail in the entrance exam”

Quotes from undergraduate college students in Mumbai

“Students from low-income background and first-generation learners attending colleges have no one to guide them in education and career choices. When we do not have basic clarity, a

career guidance tool that can be used by us independently will not work. What we need first is basic support in making career choices"

"We know what we want to do, but we want to understand what are alternate career options and various educational pathways to reach there. How much time and money would it take to educate myself?"

"I know my strengths and interests, I know what 21st century skills are, I have interned. But I am still confused about my career choice"

Conclusion

The surveys clearly establish that the confusion regarding making appropriate career choices begins early on in life, starting from when the students are about to transition from schools to higher levels of education. In the absence of adequate career counselling and guidance, this confusion continues to reign even in their college years ultimately resulting in sub optimal utilisation of talents due to lack of direction and misalignment of inherent strengths and career choices. This, therefore brings to the fore the criticality of fortifying the career counselling infrastructure in India's education system at all levels beginning from higher secondary schools right upto colleges.

B. [Antarang's Foundation's career guidance program - CareerAware](#)

There are a number of variations in the definition of career guidance. The OECD Career Guidance Policy Review defines it as "services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers". This definition includes making information about the labour market and about educational and employment opportunities more accessible by organizing it, systematizing it and having it available when and where people need it. It also includes assisting people to reflect on their aspirations, interests, competencies, personal attributes, qualifications and abilities and to match these with available training and employment opportunities (Hansen, 2006).

Recognizing the critical influence of early-on career guidance on student engagement in education, Antarang's career guidance program CareerAware, engages students from standards 9-10 in thinking about their futures and planning their careers. The CareerAware program is currently being run in partnership with the MCGM, across municipal schools in Mumbai. In 2017-18, Antarang successfully scaled the program to the cities of Udaipur and Pune in partnership with local municipal bodies. Since inception, Antarang has reached out to over to 80,000 students through the CareerAware program.

CA program structure

The CareerAware program has been designed factoring international best practices and thoughts on the subject of career guidance and counselling, at the same time contextualizing the implementation keeping in mind the domestic realities.

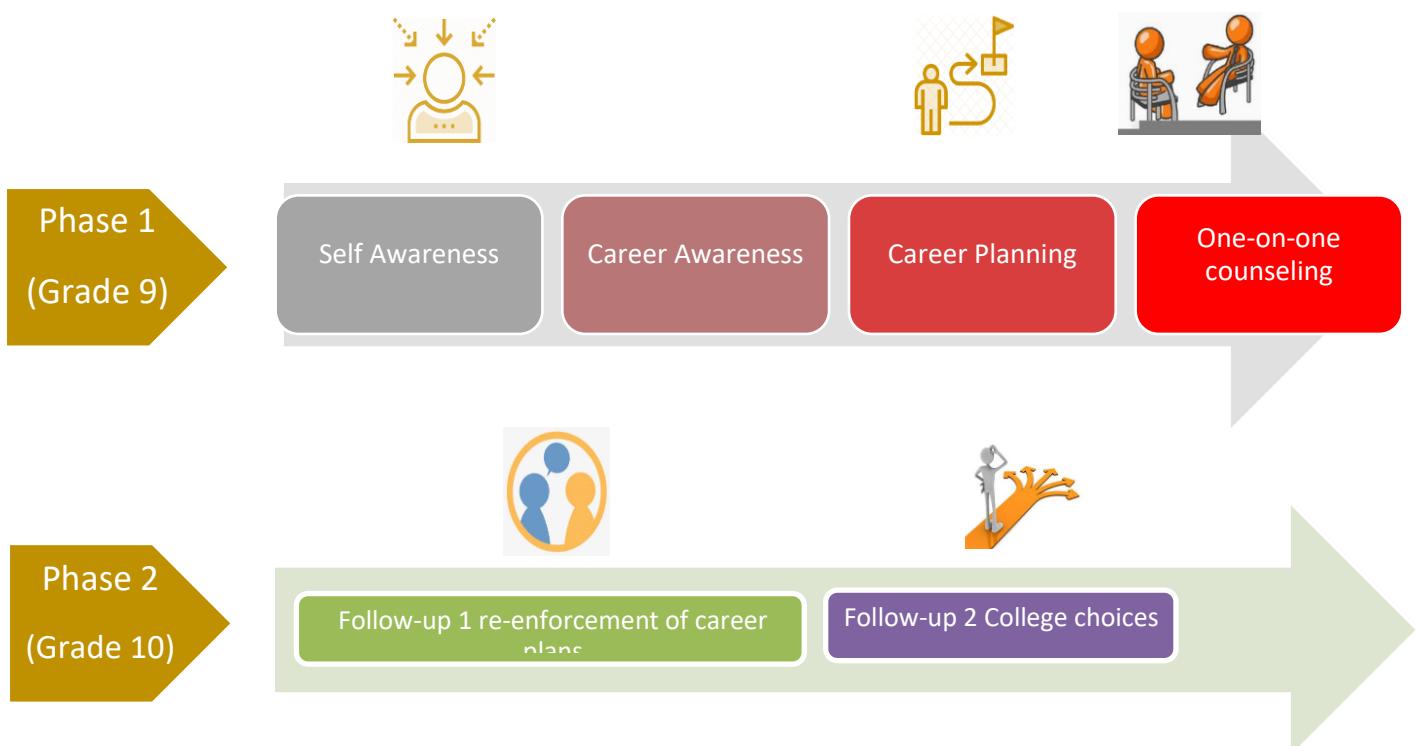


Figure 1: CareerAware program structure

CareerAware is being delivered through a customized 2-year career guidance and planning solution to students in grade 9 and 10 (includes Phase I and Phase II given above)

The workshop in Phase 1 of the program enables students to be self-aware through a series of psychometric tests, exposes them to career options most relevant to them and then guides them to make their own career plans. All of this is done through a proprietary tool developed with the help of school counselors and psychologists. A detailed guidance report is then generated for every student. In the second phase (which is conducted when the students reach Grade 10), students are guided on choice of suitable colleges.

C. Impact of CareerAware program implementation

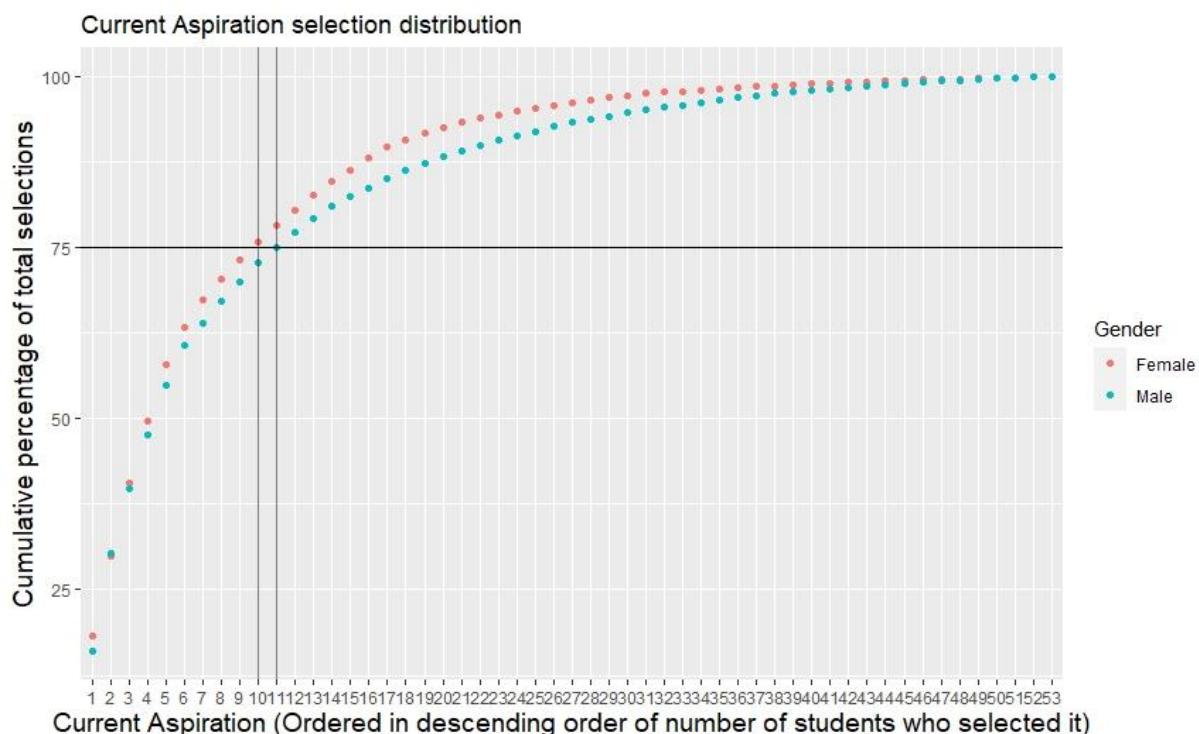
1. Career guidance leads to widening of career choices

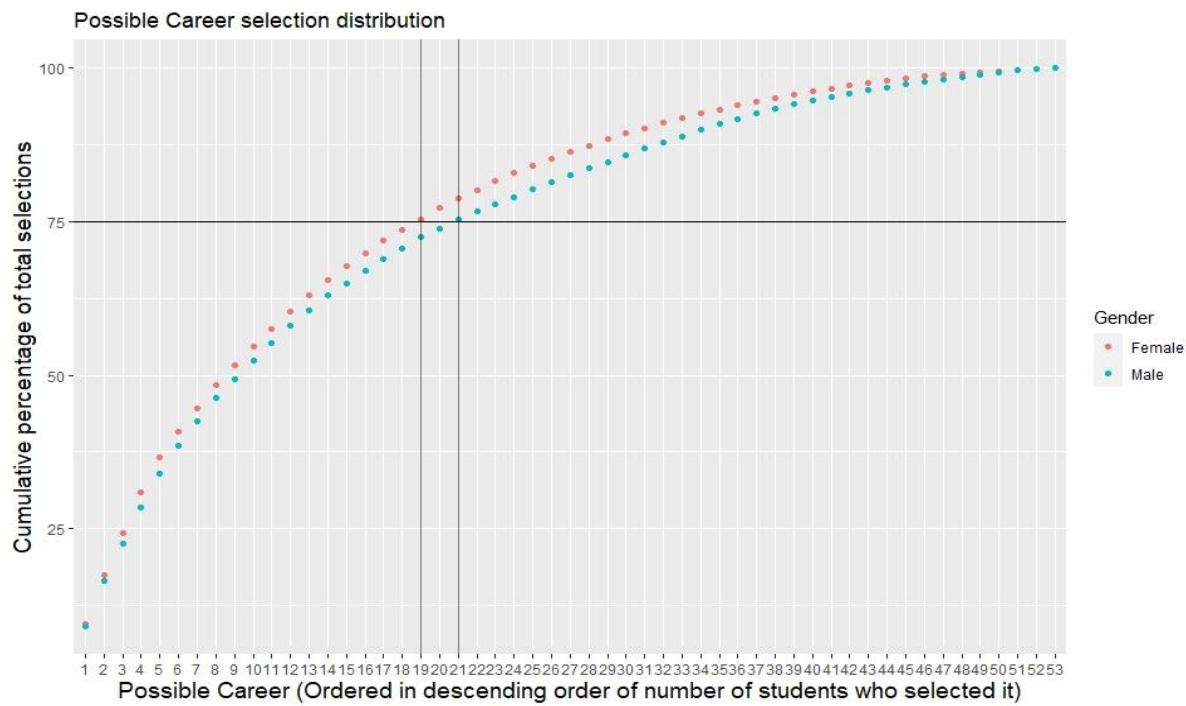
As explained in Section B above, objective of the CareerAware (CA) intervention is to facilitate an adolescent's (9th & 10th standard students) awareness of one's self, followed by an awareness of the many career options open to them which ultimately leads to an informed career choice.

Analysis of the CareerAware program implementation data spanning the past two years (which encompasses data of close to 50000 students over the two-year period) has thrown up many interesting insights, some of which are explicated below:

(i) *Basket of career choices by students expands considerably post exposure to multiple career pathways during the course of the program*

2018-19



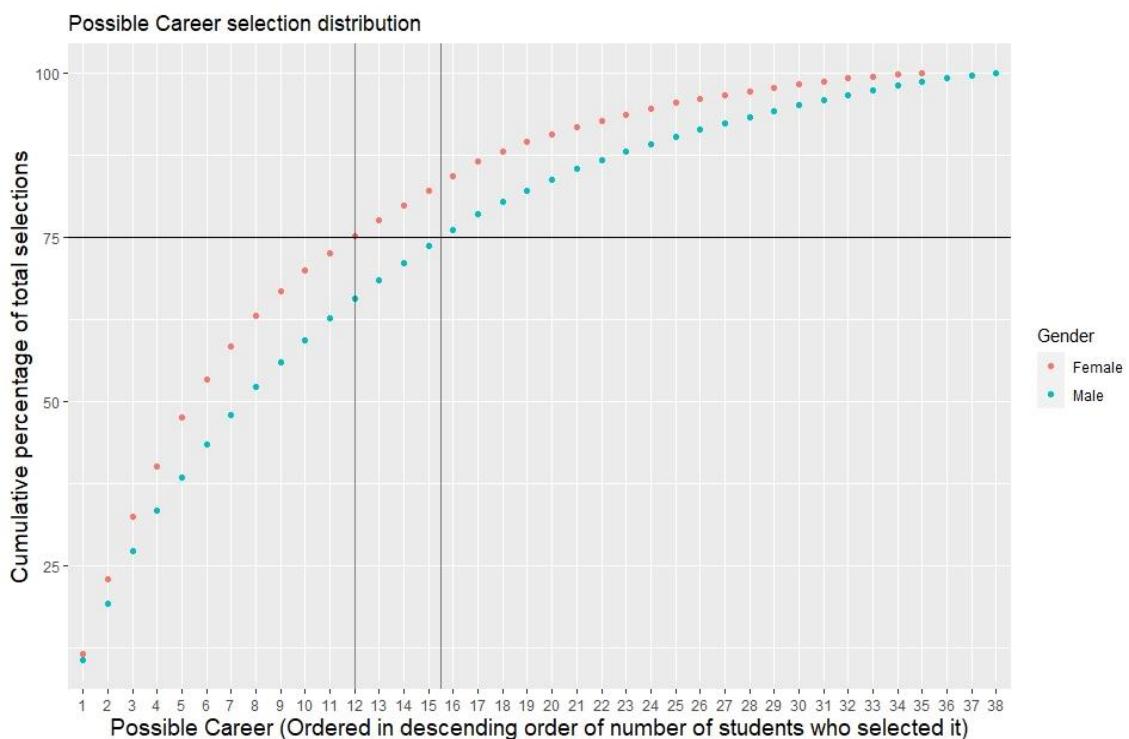
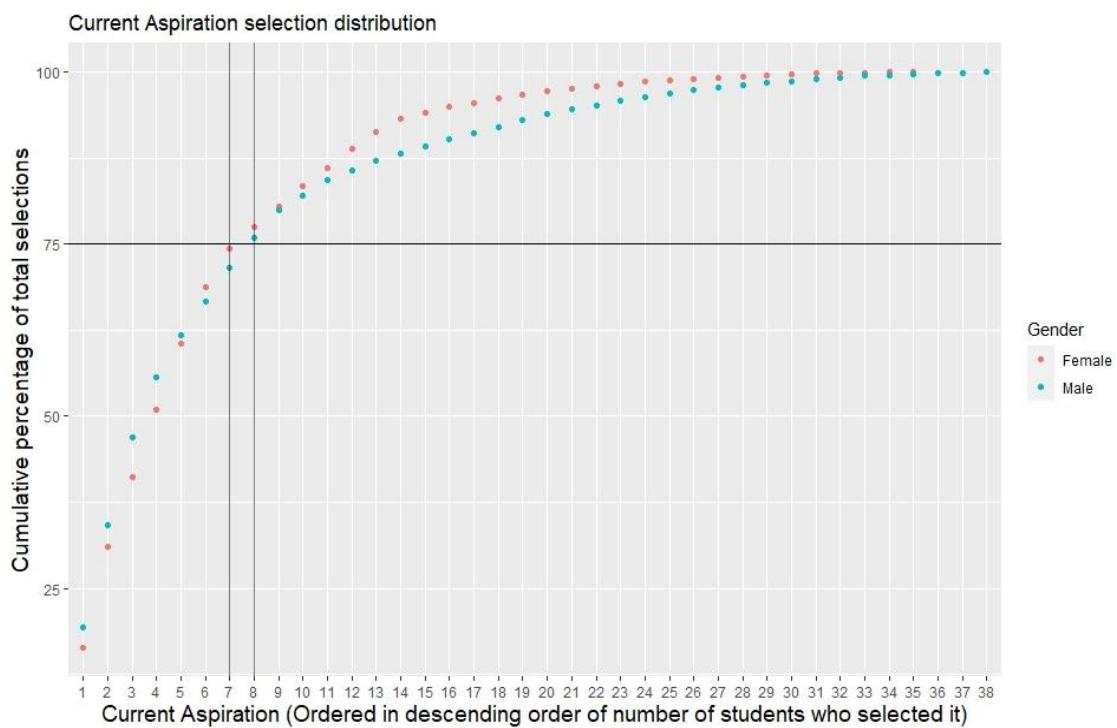


“**Current Aspiration**” denotes the **baseline** career aspiration of the students **prior** to the exposure to CareerAware **program**, whereas” **Possible Career**” refers to **endline** career choices of the student **post** participation in CareerAware **program**.

During “current aspiration” (baseline career) selection, career choices of 75% of male students in 2018-19 were restricted to around 11 professional pathways while 75% of the female students chose from amongst the top 10 professions. The “possible career” (endline career) selection was much more evenly spread, where 75% of the male students chose from amongst 21 different career pathways while 75% of female students chose from amongst 19 career pathways.

A similar trend was also observed in 2019-20.

2019-20

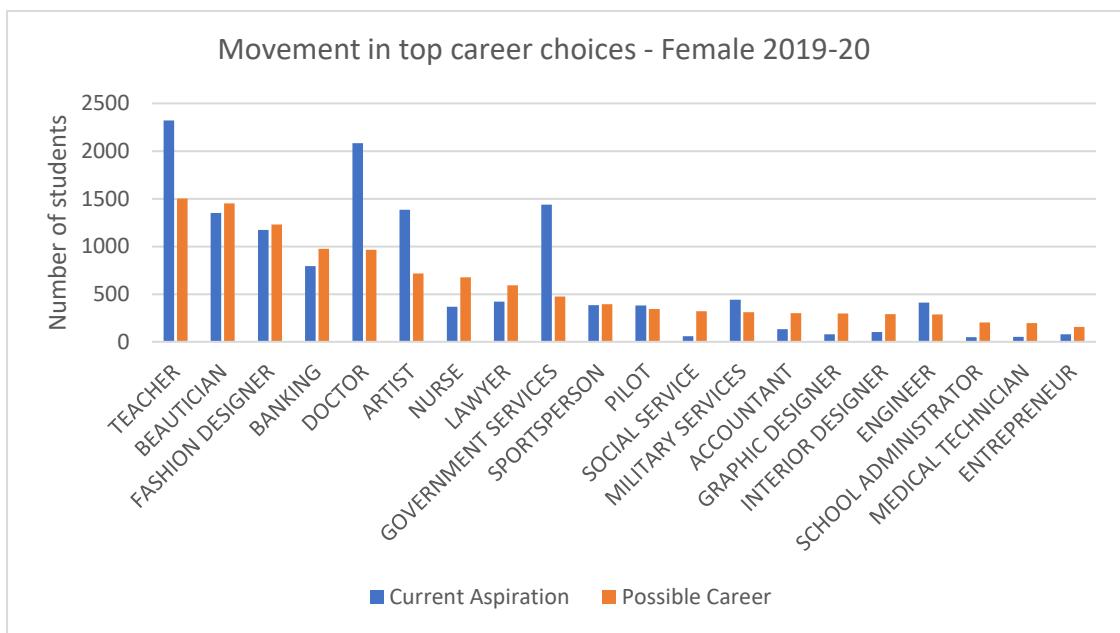
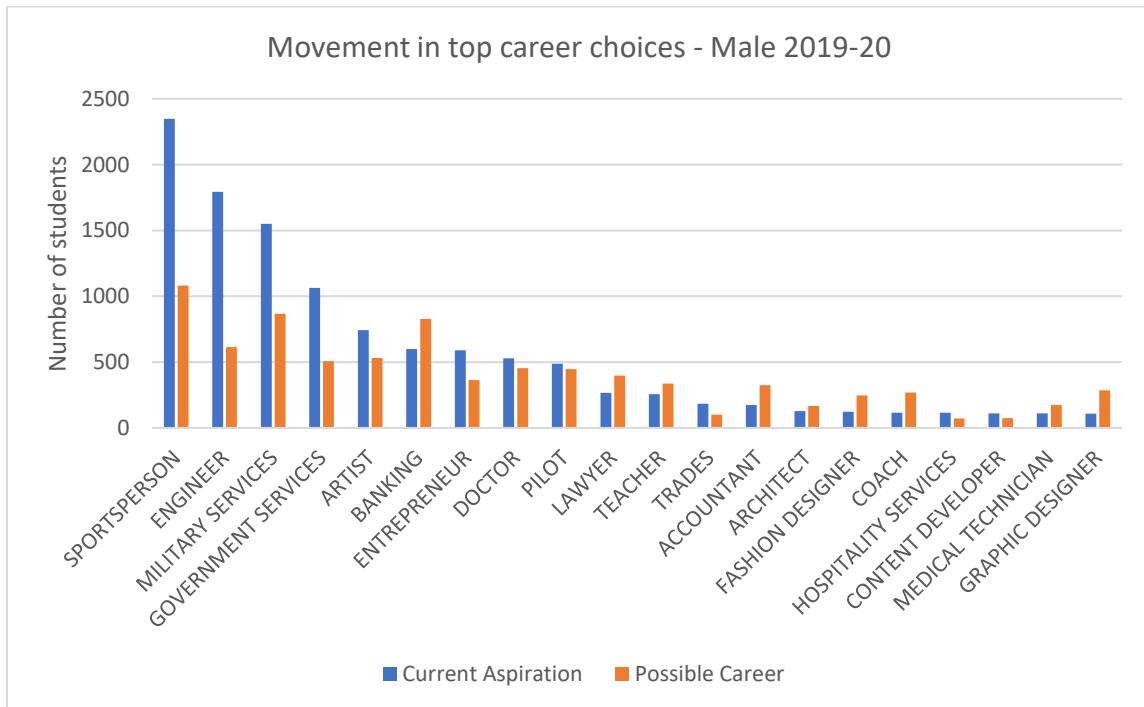


During “current aspiration” selection in 2019-20, it was found that 75% of the male students chose from amongst 8 different professional pathways while 75% of female students chose from amongst the top 7 careers. The “possible career” selection was much more evenly

spread, where 75% of the male students chose from amongst the 16 varying career pathways whereas 75% of the female students chose from amongst the top 12 careers.

Career choice of male students was more evenly spread at baseline and endline, across both years as compared to female students indicating the greater freedom that male students enjoyed in making their career selection.

An analysis of the top career choices pre and post program reveals the clear shift in career interests for both males and females.



Career aspiration of female candidates continued to hover around traditional roles such as teacher, beautician, fashion designer etc. post program indicating the strong hold of societal influences over female career choices.

2. Results of Independent Third-Party evaluation of CareerAware program

Antarang is presently undertaking an independent third-party evaluation of its CareerAware program. The evaluation which is currently underway is being conducted by research and advisory firm 4th Wheel Social Impact. A two-year longitudinal study (2018-20) is being conducted to determine the impact of the CareerAware program on students. The purpose of the evaluation is to find out if and how the 'CareerAware' program has developed the knowledge, skills and attitudes among young people, to have an impact on higher education attainment and career choices. The assessment is presently in the second year of execution and nearing conclusion. The study is being conducted across municipal schools in Mumbai with students who have participated in the CareerAware program in 2018-20. Some of the key findings of the evaluation study are shared below:

Outcome 1: Increase in Education Aspirations

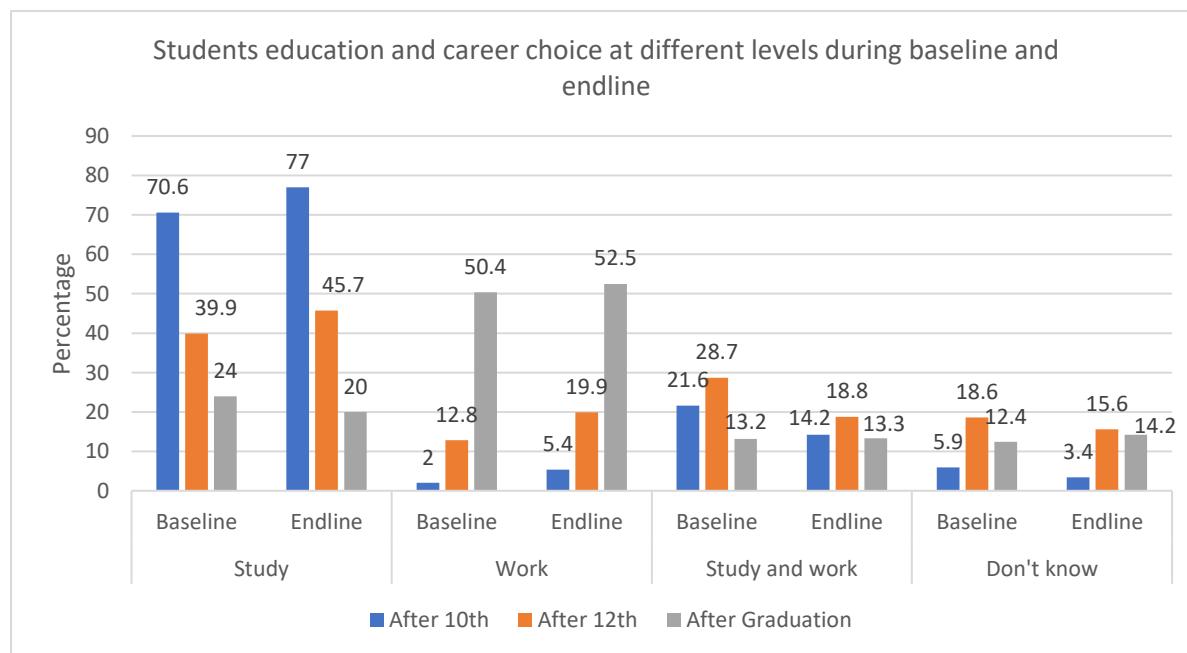


Figure 2: Education and Career choices

Education aspirations showed positive trends, with more students opting to solely pursue education at each higher level of education. There was an increase of 6.40% students wanting

to study after 10th while an increase of 5.80% was noted among students wanting to study post 12th. A positive downward trend was seen among students who were unclear about their education and professional paths from baseline to end line.

Outcome 2: Higher awareness of Education Pathways

While analyzing student education aspirations match to career goals from the baseline to end line, a higher number of students had education aspirations that matched their career goals. There was a 5.6% increase in the number of students intending to pursue mainstream education after 10th standard, while there was a decrease of 9.9% of students wanting to pursue mainstream education after 12th. ***A much larger decrease of 35.6% was seen in students wanting to pursue mainstream education after graduation. This is a result of the training as many students preferred pursuing jobs which were more practical in nature, for example, electrician, beautician, bike/car mechanic, mobile repairer. For such occupations, rather than doing mainstream education, the students shifted to Vocational courses after 12th and Graduation. As a result of this, there is a significant increase in the students who wanted to pursue Vocational courses after 10th, 12th and Graduation.***

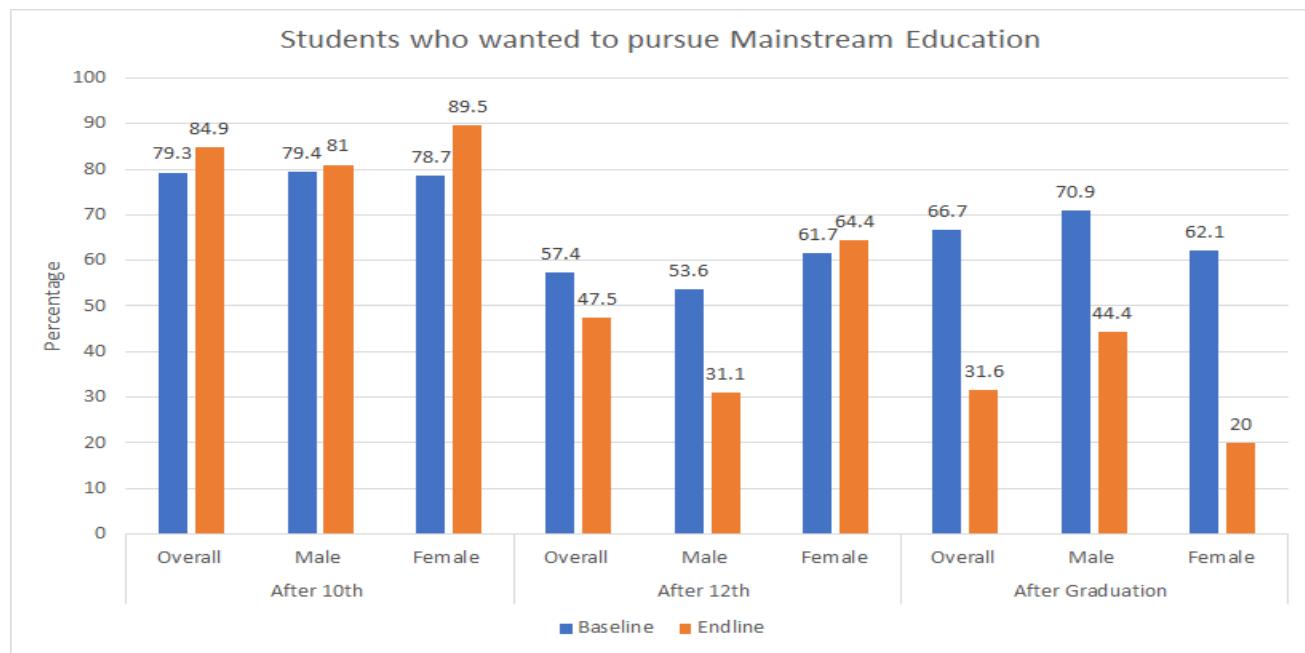


Figure 3: Students aspiring Mainstream education

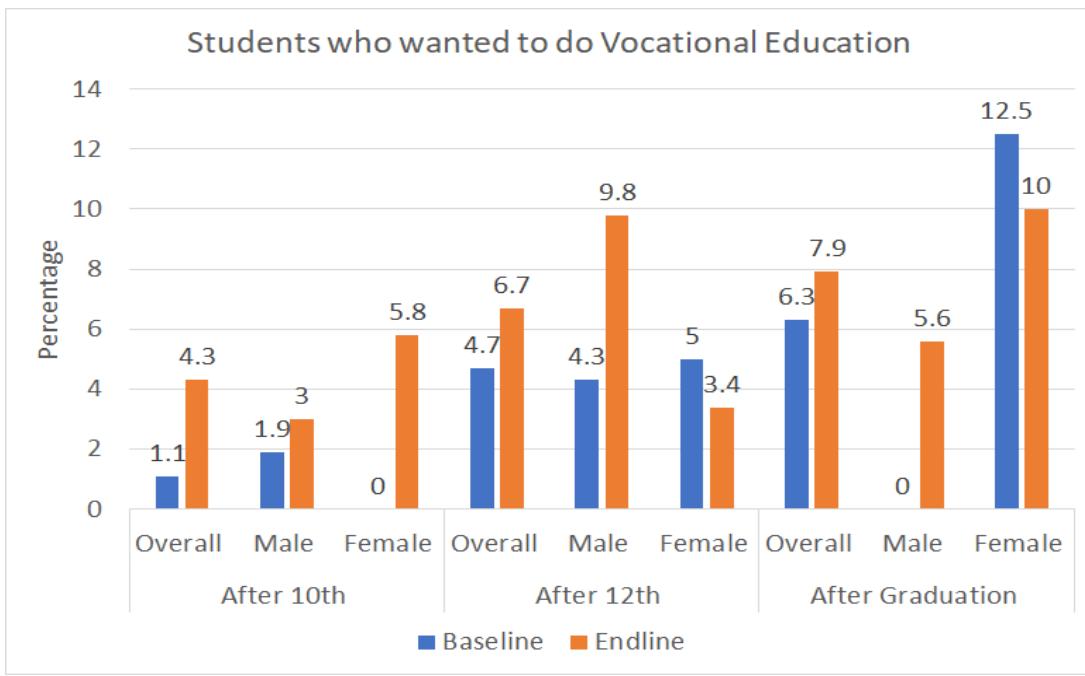


Figure 4: Students aspiring for Vocational education

Outcome 3: Clarity of Career Goals

There was a positive program impact on students who were now able to better understand and articulate their professional aspirations.

- 13.24% of students who did not have any professional dream had one by the endline.
- 39.22% of students changed their professional dream by endline.
- 5.88% students' professional dream became more specific and clearer by the end line.
- 29.9% students had the same professional dream from baseline to endline. Many students did not change their dreams. However, the data showed that while the aspirations did not change, students showcased clearer pathways to achieve their career goals.
- 69.2% students had changed the type of jobs they want to do from baseline to end line. Respondents who wanted to work after 12th had become more specific about the kind of work they wanted to engage in during the endline, than baseline. There was more diversity and clarity in career options after 12th by end line. Among those respondents who stated that they wanted to work, mentioned job types such as banking, business, computer-related work, service jobs (police, IPS, army), engineering, technical jobs such as AC repair, electrician, tailor, mobile repairing, mechanic, etc. Further, respondents became more specific in the overarching job type, such as in engineering, respondents mentioned different occupations such as

computer, electrical, mechanical, software, in communications - animation, graphic designer, journalist, etc were stated during endline.

- While students were more aware about different career paths by the end of the program, factors such as financial security, permission from family, technical and other skills, etc. shall play an important role in determining whether they are able to pursue a career of their choice.

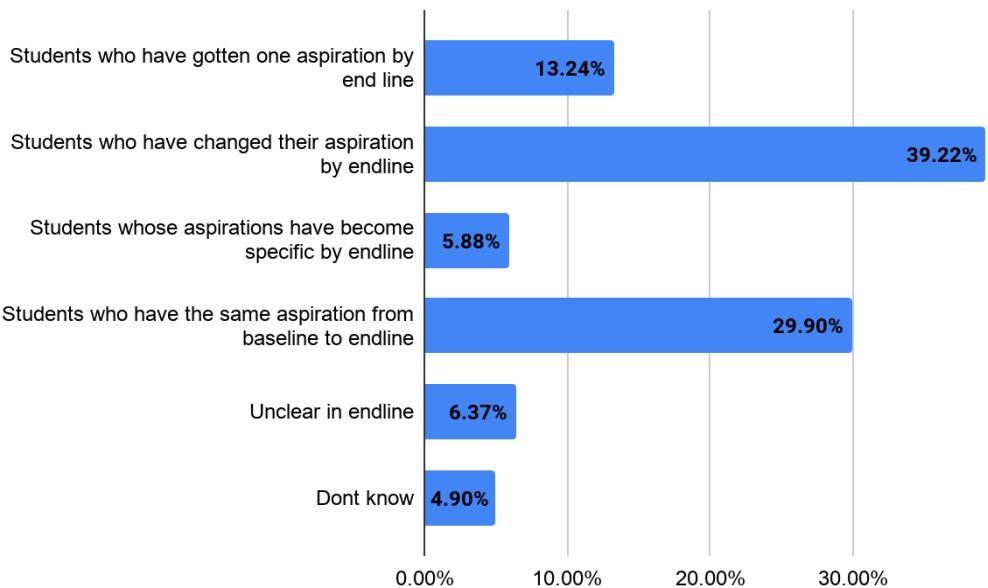


Figure 5: Student aspiration at endline

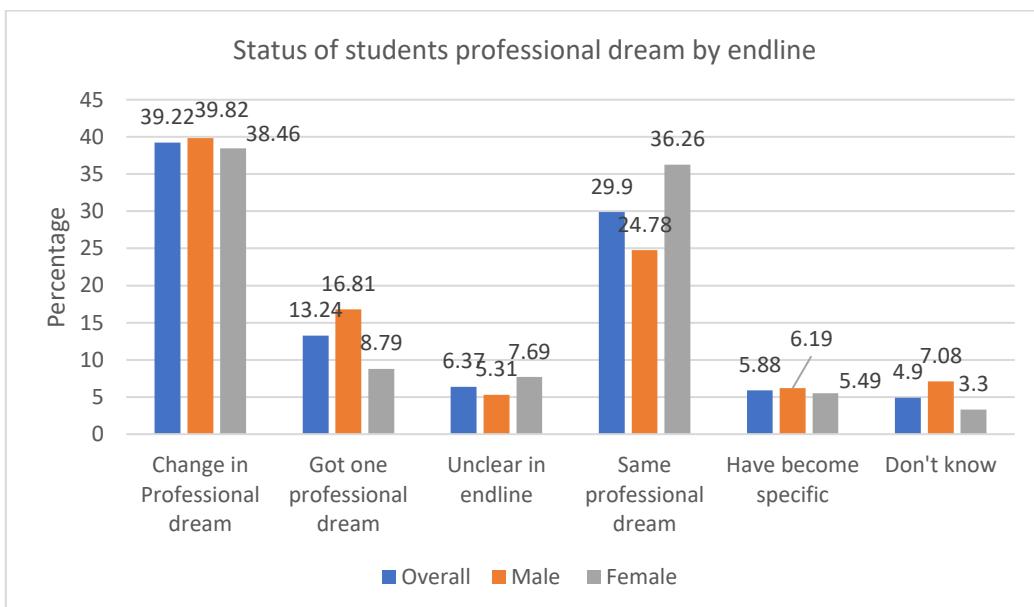


Figure 6: Student aspiration at endline – Gender wise

The above analysis of CareerAware implementation results clearly establishes the benefits of a career guidance program in broadening and catalyzing the career aspirations of youth as well as causing better alignment of educational pathways to career aspirations.

III. Conclusion

The **New Education Policy 2020 (NEP)** in a path-breaking move seeks to embed a multi-disciplinary approach to education right from higher secondary (9th standard). As per the policy vision, students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school - including subjects in physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills – so that they can design their own paths of study and life plans. Holistic development and a wide choice of subjects and courses year to year will be the new distinguishing feature of secondary school education.

Given the wide choice and combination of educational and correspondingly career pathways that will now be thrown open to the students, educational and career guidance assumes paramount importance to enable students to navigate the maze of options. Access to career guidance services becomes desirable where flexible pathways have been introduced into programmes to allow upward mobility and avoid dead-ends. Provision of career guidance is necessary to lubricate such reforms and enable students to take advantage of them (Watts A.G, 2009).

Thus, fortifying the career counselling infrastructure at all levels of our education system has become need of the hour to enable effective and meaningful implementation of the NEP, especially given the extremely low level of penetration of such services. Not only would it ensure a more productively engaged youth in employment as effective career guidance would ensure appropriate channelising of skills, but it would also bolster labour market outcomes through a more a more equitable distribution of labour force.

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