Universal Career Readiness Diagnostic: Pilot findings

antarang

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Overview

The Universal Career Readiness Diagnostic was developed as an online tool to enable young adults (16-25) to quickly review their career readiness in these turbulent times and receive recommendations on concrete next steps they could take to upskill and stay relevant.

It was meant to answer the question - **How employable am I?**

The tool was piloted across **242 adolescents and young adults** across under-served and well-resourced high schools and colleges. Young working professionals were also interviewed. The pilot was conucted between August and November, 2020.

The primary finding was that in its current form the tool is too broad to meet the needs of any specific age group and the recommendations are generic, rather than concrete.

Summary of the feedback

The feedback was collected through the feedback form at the end of the tool.

	Interface	Language	Report	Recommending this to a friend
Data	3.6*	3.8	3.7	4.1

*the word interface does not seem to have been understood by the students and hence a low rating seems to have been assigned in the online feedback form, however, during FGDs students gave a rating of 5 on ease of use of software

Profile of the participants

242 participants undertook the review of whom 188 completed the entire review. Participants were chosen from a wide range of backgrounds.

	Higher Sec	Undergraduate College	Post graduate college	Working
Under-served	130	64		3
Well-resourced			6	8
Discussion	23	14	3	8

Methodology

How were participants selected for taking the review and for the discussions. What questions were they taken through and how.

Analysis of scores: definitions

Exceptional	I possess a strong sense of self-awareness, career awareness, and actively demonstrate the skills and mindsets required in a 21 st century workplace. I have reviewed my career in an objective manner. I have mapped out a clear career plan for next 3 years.
Proficient	I possess a strong sense of self-awareness, career awareness, and the skills and mindsets required in a 21 st century workplace. I understand that careers require a long-term perspective, and I have started making intentional choices to reach my long-term career goals. I actively conduct research on my field(s) of interest. I possess the ability to review my career readiness in an objective manner.
Developing	I have some sense of self-awareness. I am job ready and understand what skills, knowledge and attitudes are required to perform the jobs that I am interested in. I have some understanding of how the jobs that I wish to pursue will help me build my career. My ability to review my career readiness objectively is variable. I have begun thinking about opportunities that help me move forward.
Emerging	I sometimes think about my interests, aptitudes, and aspirations. I have some idea of what skills, knowledge and attitudes are needed to get a job. I am willing to take whatever job comes my way and I am not sure how it will help me grow my career. I am beginning to understand how to gather evidence to review my career readiness effectively.
Foundation	I have not thought about my interests, aptitudes, and aspirations. I have very little ides of what skills, knowledge and attitudes are needed to get a job. I am willing to take whatever job comes my way and I am not sure how it will help me to grow my career. I want to grow my career but don't yet know how.

Analysis of scores

	Self Awareness	Career Awareness	Skills and Mindset	Overall
Foundation	0%	16%	0%	0%
Emerging	3%	44%	13%	6%
Developing	26%	35%	43%	69%
Proficient	52%	5%	37%	24%
Exceptional	19%	0%	7%	0%
Average Score	**Proficient**	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Developing**

Self-awareness scores are skewed because the section is self-reported and for choosing any option a point is allotted, unless the user clicks on "No" (ex: do you know what your interests are - "No"). Without guidance on what some of the concepts mean, users are likely to click on "Yes".

# The participants' experience of using the tool

The following section outlines what the students enjoyed/found easy while exploring the tool as well what was challenging.

	Higher secondary school students	Undergraduate college students	Post-grad/Young working professionals
Topics covered	A significant amount of time was spent discussing each concept so that the students would understand what was being asked of them. Most of the concepts were unfamiliar to them at first. However, upon discussion, most students felt that these topics were relevant and worth thinking about with regard to their way forward. The third section of the tool that focused on case studies in the work place aimed at understanding the relevant skills and mindsets were hard for students to relate with.	The students liked the in-depth and comprehensive coverage of the concepts related to career readiness and felt that almost all the topics covered under each of the three sections were relevant and could be retained in the test. A few students were not sure about the relevance of realities and personality related questions. A random check of their understanding revealed that in most of the cases they could justify the reasons why they felt that the questions should be retained in the test	The participants liked the case studies, especially those focused on skills and mindsets, and how to navigate their work environment, as that was most relevant to their situation. Many of them did not find the first two sections of the tool entirely relevant as most of them had already chosen careers they thought were the right fit for them. Further, in section two, they did not find the questions that probed their knowledge of other sectors relevant.

	Higher secondary school students	Undergraduate college students	Post-grad/Young working professionals
Language	Students found the language to be complicated and some words/concepts were challenging for them to comprehend.	Language was difficult especially technical words eg critical thinking, boundaries, initiative, resilience, personality, ethical conduct etc	The language and most concepts were easy to comprehend.
Interface	All participants found the interface easy to navigate. The primary challenge was that there was no "save" button, hence they were unablt to save their inputs in between and had to complete the entire review in one sitting.		
Length	On an average students took an hour to complete the review. Some students discussed that this was challenging given poor connectivity or intermittent access to devices.	Close to 50% of the students felt that the review was lengthy and. On an average students took about 45 minutes to an hour to complete it and shared that 30 minutes would be ideal.	The tool did not take them too long to complete but they felt the first two sections were irrelevant, hence they were tired/bored by the time they got the third section.

	Higher secondary school students	Undergraduate college students	Post-grad/Young working professionals
Report card	The report card format was confusing. They wanted a report card that resembled their school report cards and was easy to decipher. Students could not make the connection between what they had answered in the UCRD and the report card as the language was different.	More than half of the students found the report complicated. They found it difficult to interpret their scores in the report as they felt the colour coding and presentation of scores was complex. Students felt the report card was lengthy and verbose. They felt that youth may not enjoy reading so much of text and therefore may not see the benefit of this report card beforehand and as result may not bother to read the report card.	The report card was easy for them to understand but did not provide them with the types of output they were looking for, which in most cases was linkages to employment opportunities.

	Higher secondary school students	Undergraduate college students	Post-grad/Young working professionals
Resources	None of them opened the resources and in most cases they did not realise that the term "resources" referred to helpful links that would provide guidance. Since the report card itself was challenging to navigate, the students did not get to the point of being able to explore the resources. The call to action in terms of exploring the resources was not clear.	Almost none of the students had looked at the resources, although many of them had understood how to access them. On probing, the impression gathered was that the students did not seem to realise the criticality of the resources or the call to action. One of the students indicated that the word "Resources" did not look exciting enough for youth to want to read further. Another student said that many a times we are not even clear about our career choices and hence may not see the worth in reading up further in the absence of basic clarity. For those who accesses the resources, they found the language to be complex.	They found the resources around managing work place expectations useful. Participants spoke of wanting resources in the form of employment linkages.
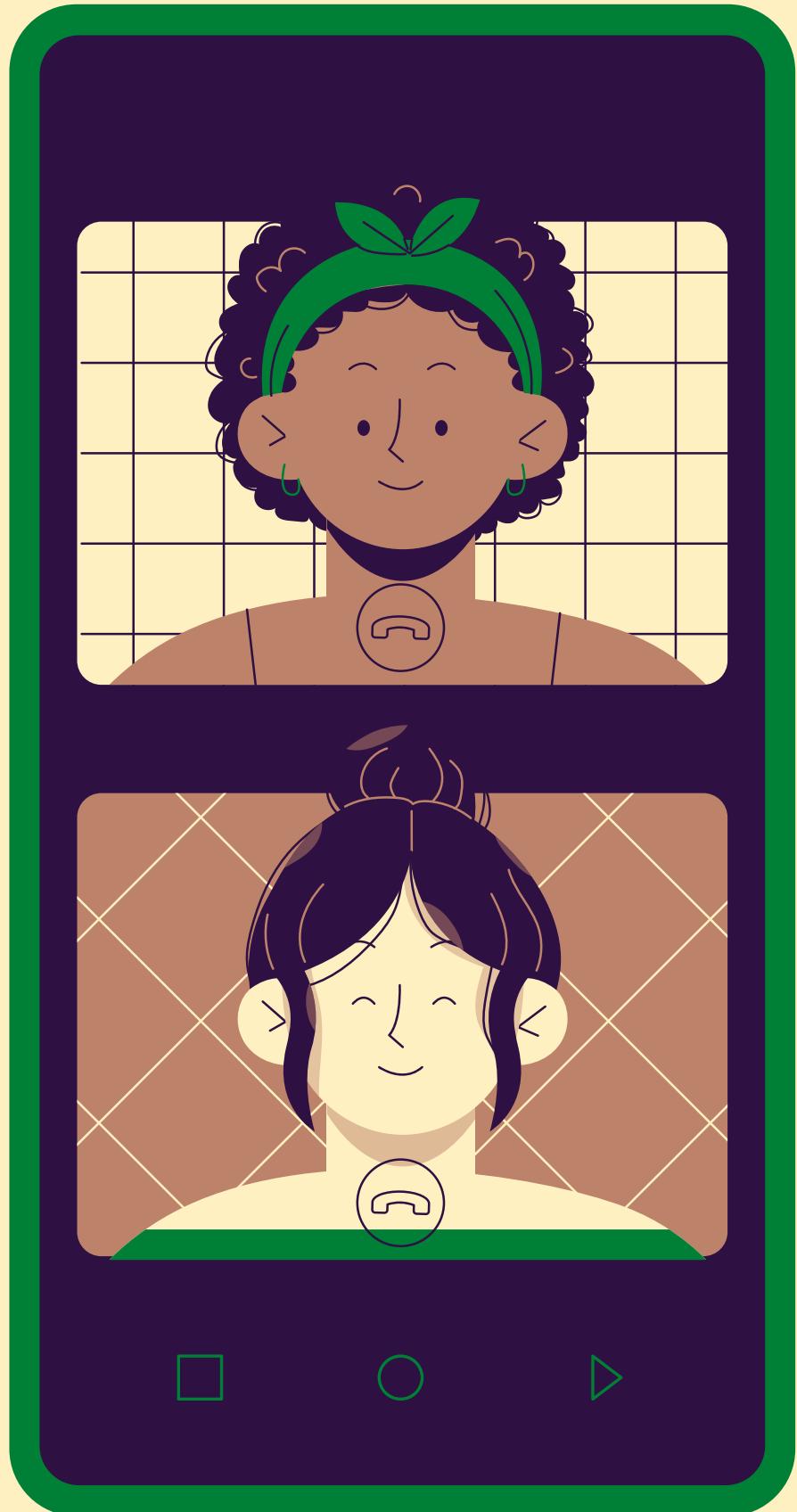
Participants' primary career related questions

This section outlines the most pressing questions that the participants wanted the tool to be able to answer.

	Higher secondary school students	Undergraduate college students	Post-grad/Young working professionals
Questions	- How do I understand my interests? - How do I choose a stream? - How do I think of a back up plan in case my main plan does not work out? - How do I choose a college? - I want to join a specific career (police, graphic design), what steps do I need to take?	- What do I do if Plan A fails? - What do I do next to pursue a career of my choice, how much would studying further cost? - How do I make the right choice after 12th? - How do I prepare for exams/interviews to get placed? - What is the future scope in the job of my choice? - How do I continue in my career of choice given the family pressure?	- What are the job opportunities in the field I'm pursuing? - What is the career path in my industry of interest in terms of my progression? - What is the package (CTA) in a field? - How can I gain exposure in my field of interest to be ahead of the curve?
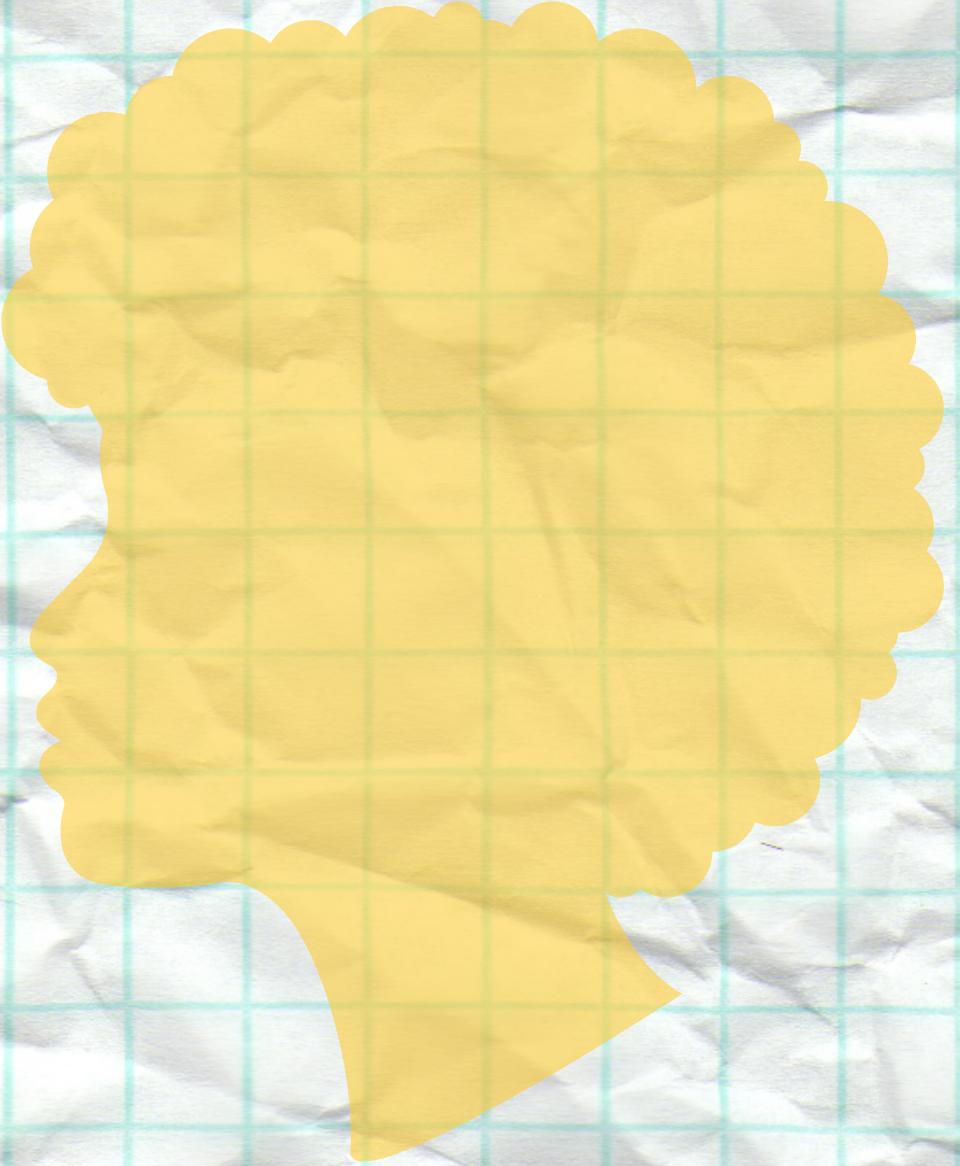
One of the undergraduate students shared that although she had scored well on certain parameters, she herself felt that she did not possess adequate knowledge of the skill and hence resources should be given in all instances irrespective of score.

When discussing one of the case studies on a first generation college-goer, the student deeply resonated with the subject's situation. Her belief was that if one is first generation college goer or is confused about their career choices, their primary requirement would be to get appropriate career guidance and hence this report card may not be useful without that guidance.

Other students felt that if a student was clear on their career choice, then they might be more interested in section 2 or section 3 of report which would help them in understanding career exploration and work skills. However, without a clear sense of self-awareness, thinking of career pathways might be counterproductive and overwhelming.

Observations and open questions

This section outlines a few observations and open questions that will enable us to determine the way forward.
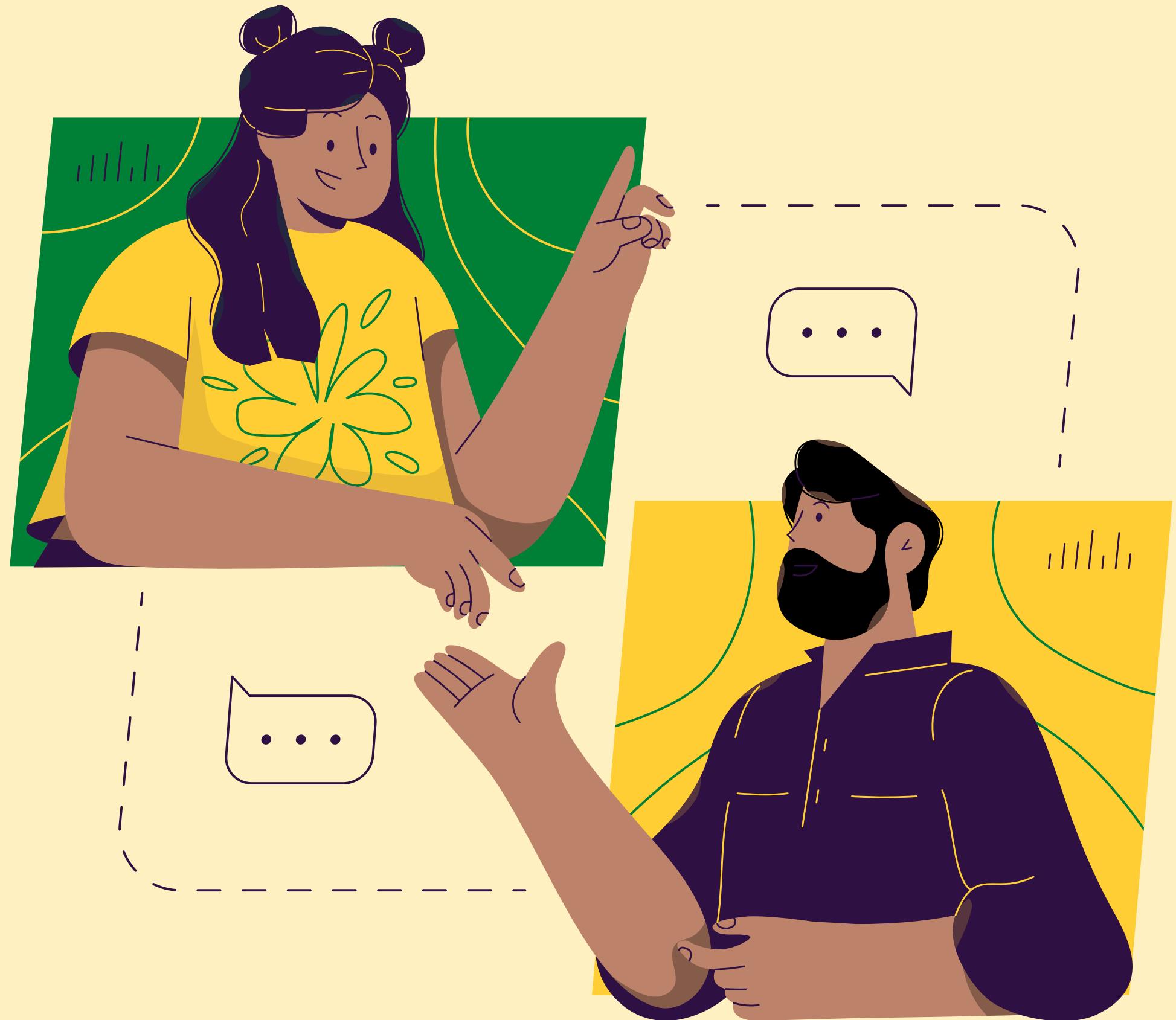
Observations

- Translation is required for the tool have a wider reach.
- The "why" behind the statements is not clear to the participants, hence the logic of the report is unclear. When a user looks at a question like the one below, they are not sure how this relates back to their career and it starts feeling irrelevant. Further, when they receive a score on the same criteria but it is labeled as their ability to find and discern information, they are not able to make the connection as to how they got that score.

Statement 8 (Please scroll down to see questions and answer options.)

a. You come across the following 2 articles. The first one is received by you as a Whatsapp message and the second one is a write-up published in the Ministry of Skill Development Annual Report 2019. Which article do you think should be considered as a reliable source of information?

Article 1: Whatsapp forward received by you from friend

Lots of jobs opportunities coming up in the Media and Entertainment, Beauty and Wellness and Tourism sector in the next three years. These sectors are expected to offer lots of entry level job opportunities and hence one should focus on possible job openings in these sectors depending on our interests and aptitude.

Article 2: Published in the Ministry of Skill Development Annual Report 2019.

The sectors which are expected to employ the maximum number of people in India during the five year period (2017-2022) are Building and Construction (9 crore people), Retail (5 crore), Logistics, Transport and Warehousing (3 crore), Textile (2.5 crore) and Education (1.8 crore). Around 10 crore is the additional human resource requirement across all sectors in India during this time period. The state of Maharashtra is expected to see the maximum Human resource requirement between the period 2013-2022 at 1.5 crore.

○ Article 1
○ Article 2

Observations

- Output does not match what the student might want. For example, see the statement below. After answering such a question, a student might want an output that tells them their aptitude code and what careers fit that code, but instead they receive an output that says they understand their aptitude. Further, the resources provided come all the way at the end after they have answered many questions.

Statement 2

a. I have undergone a test to assess my aptitude code (The Differential Aptitude Test is an example of an aptitude test).

- ⦿ Yes
- ○ No

b. Which of the below best describes your aptitude code?

- ○ You are good at visualizing and analyzing objects and patterns eg, you can imagine how a 3 dimensional object would be like based on a 2 dimensional image.
- ⦿ You are good with interpreting numbers, data, graphs, figures etc.
- ○ You are good with understanding of machines and how tools work.
- ○ You are good at analyzing relationships between objects and patterns, cause and results etc.
- ○ You have a good command over interpreting languages.
- ○ You are good at using your imagination and presenting your thoughts in different ways.

Questions that emerged

- When the tool tries to spread itself across too many age ranges where participants are in very different stages of their career journey, the tool becomes redundant. What age group should we target?
- What types of concepts lend themselves to purely virtual learning and what concepts require guidance?
- Should the tool be self-reported or validated? Should it be developmental or like ASER where the one being tested is not aware of the logic behind the testing and does not use the data themselves.
- What is the purpose they are using this for? (The "so what" question). What are their pressing needs and what is the value of each section and report card?
- What is the incentive to be honest/lie?

The way forward

The following section outlines how we have decided to move forward based on the feedback received and the needs expressed by the participants.

Recommendations

- We would like for it to focus on high school and higher secondary age students so that students can make more informed choices at a younger age.
- The tool should cater to their main question of concern and in a modular manner. Example, users can choose the question that best suits them and then focus on a shorter set of questions and resources:
  - I am not sure of what my interests are and what I may be good at when thinking about a career (4 statements; 10 minutes)
  - I know my interests and what I am good at, but I do not know what jobs may be suitable for me (5 statements; 10 minutes)
  - I know what jobs may be suitable for me but I do not know how to enter this career (7 statements; 15 minutes)
- The report card should be available for each section with concrete resources providing them with a clear path forward.
- Each questions' purpose and output need to be probed

This report was compiled in November, 2020 by Ashvini Patil (Antarang Foundation) and Anushri Alva (Adhyayan Quality Education Foundation).