Chapter 8

Career Life Skills for 10th Grade Boys in Delhi, India: Mapping Information Literacies for Sustainable Development

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Abstract The pressure is high on career educators to develop information literacies as a life skill for themselves as well as for youth, particularly those from disadvantaged communities, and to document and process career information in a rapidly changing world of work that is relevant to their sociocultural and environmental contexts. We employ a critical or transformative approach to information literacies to explore young people's socially situated practices of collecting, validating, and processing career information as well as how they might "democratically transform structures of authority over information exchanges, and then maintain scrutiny over this authority" (Whitworth A, *Radical information literacy: reclaiming the political heart of the IL movement*. Elsevier, 2014, p. 2). We draw from qualitative interviews with ten boys studying in 10th grade at a government school in Delhi, India, and videos produced by them to map their career information landscapes. Using an education for sustainable development lens, "bumps" were made visible in their information landscapes, that is, the tensions that emerge between multiple informational actors for reimagining sustainable futures. We suggest that these tensions can serve as cultural resources that students can democratically engage with in developing crucial career and life skills for their futures.

Keywords Information literacy · Careers education · Sustainable development goals (SDGs) · Critical literacy · Career guidance · Education for sustainable development · India

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Acronyms

ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
SC	Scheduled Castes
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ST	Scheduled Tribes
TI	Teach India

Introduction

Providing relevant career information to youth, such as a range of available occupations, qualifications required, working conditions, remuneration and other benefits, labor market trends and so on, is a central task of career educators and counselors (Hooley, 2012; Kumar & Arulmani, 2014). In India, much career guidance serves middle-class and elite students. In this research, we wanted to understand what it would mean to employ an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) perspective¹ in career guidance for first-generation learners studying in government (public) schools in India, specifically in Delhi. In particular, we wanted to better understand how one ESD competency, namely the “acquiring and processing of information”—or the capacity of the learner to “acquire information on topics of globalization and development and process it topic-relatedly”—could inform career guidance and planning for young people (Schreiber & Seige, 2016, p. 95).

Career information literacy is considered to be a core competency for career educators, defined as the ability to find, access, evaluate, and produce information pertinent to education, training, and, employment opportunities, and enable students to utilize this information effectively (Hooley, 2012; Kumar & Arulmani, 2014). The rise in information communications technologies (ICT), particularly the internet and online technologies, have changed the context of career guidance and education significantly and raised several challenges for youth, and career educators, and counselors (Hooley, 2012). Youth often face information overload. That is, the production of career information as well as access to such information has expanded due to the rise in information and communication technologies (ICT). Selecting, validating, and organizing relevant information so that it can be easily retrieved when needed is a challenge and an important life skill in itself. Further, while youth often have access to such information, they need guidance in processing the information meaningfully. Career educators need to also develop

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¹We deployed the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) competency framework developed by members of the ESD Expert Network in this project (see Schreiber & Seige, 2016, for a description of this framework).

their interpretive skills to process such information so that they can be responsive to the specific contexts of the youth they serve (Kumar & Arulmani, 2014).

At the same time as youth are overloaded with information, there is also a lack of information available, particularly in geographies away from urban centers, and for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, the information available for students from middle-class and upper-class backgrounds, and/or for urban geographies, has limited relevance for disadvantaged youth. For instance, youth from scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST)² religious minorities, women, gender and sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities need specific information regarding government programs, scholarships, bank loans, hostel and travel facilities, among other information (Kumar & Arulmani, 2014). Sourcing relevant labor market information for these students is a major challenge.

Information literacy skills are not merely technical skills, but they are also socio-political in that they involve making choices regarding the kind of information to look for, for whom, and from whose perspective to interpret such information (Andersen, 2006; Whitworth, 2014). Making sense of youth's values and needs, as well as labor market information, is invariably shaped by one's cultural and political orientations. For instance, educators have to make choices around guiding students from disadvantaged backgrounds to adjust their aspirations to what is "realistically" possible within their labor market horizons, and/or work towards raising their aspirations and employability skills beyond these horizons (Watts, 1996). While the first choice entails being complicit with the status quo of the labor market, the second choice would mean that students would individualize their struggles and failures in challenging this status quo. A radical approach to career guidance would require transforming the labor market to be more equitable and sustainable, by teaching young people to make consistent collective demands on powerful authorities for better work conditions, raising pay structure, and/or better work/life balance (Watts, 1996). The risk involved is that employers are likely to read employees or potential employees, and particularly youth, who make such demands as disobedient and troublemakers, and not hire them.

In this chapter, we explore the information literacy practices of young boys for the purpose of career planning from a sustainable development perspective, to have a better understanding of how students: (a) make sense of the environmental and social implications of their career aspirations within their specific contexts, (b) consider how they might "green" particular careers, that is, think through how they could work towards environmental and social justice through their careers of interest, (c) reflect on how social, economic, cultural, and environmental inequalities

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² Scheduled castes (SC) refers to those groups historically deemed to be outside of the caste system in the Brahmanical order, and who suffer from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the historical practice of untouchability as specified in Clause 1 of Article 341 of the Constitution of India (also referred to as *Dalit* meaning oppressed). Scheduled tribes (ST) refers to indigenous tribes as specified in Article 342 of the Constitution of India (also referred to as *Adivasi* meaning earliest inhabitants). Both groups are entitled to reservations in education and employment.

shape their career aspirations and choices, and/or (d) make career-related decisions based on the sustainable development issues that they are most interested in addressing (Plant, 2014). While the information literacy skills needed for career planning and competencies for learning about sustainable development may seem different and unrelated, we argue that they are deeply connected as exploring the issues that are most relevant to students' lives allow for more situated understandings of students' career aspirations and motivations.

Education for Sustainable Development and Career Guidance

In response to the challenges faced by the world due to globalization, the sustainable development (SD) agenda emerged initially during the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Later in 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were released as a set of goals that the world needed to collectively address certain global issues by 2030 (McKeown & Hopkins, 2007; Sustainable Development Goals, 2015).

Career guidance and education scholars have mostly engaged with SDG 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) and SDG 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education). These scholars and practitioners have acknowledged the tensions between economic growth and decent work, and the precarious links between education, employability skills, and employment (DeJaeghere, 2018; Di Fabio & Maree, 2016; Pouyaud & Guichard, 2017; Sustainable Development Goals, 2015). This work has elaborated how neoliberal economic policies create unsustainable ways of living by disrupting the balance between work and other aspects of life for individuals (Pouyaud & Guichard, 2017), and how career and entrepreneurship education programs in neoliberal contexts have contributed to the production of social inequalities globally (DeJaeghere, 2018). For instance, globalization has led to the precarization of work for the world's poor, increased migrations from rural to urban areas in search of decent work, and poor working and living conditions for laborers (Kumar & Arulmani, 2014). Even for middle-class youth, job security has shifted to employability security, meaning they are expected to secure employability through the development of life skills such as learning to learn and adapting to changing work contexts, and they can no longer expect to secure their jobs by staying in one organization (Hooley et al., 2017).

Scholars writing about the changing world of work for youth have often not made explicit connections between social and environmental inequalities, particularly in non-Western contexts. Arulmani (2011) has also made the connections between social and environmental inequalities explicit in his cultural preparedness model for career guidance in India. He has argued that although globalization and neoliberal economic development have changed the world significantly in India, career guidance models developed in the "west" designed for particular cultural orientations towards life and work are not relevant for diverse communities in India.

Modernist orientations of work are based on notions of economic growth that value the over-consumption of resources for certain individuals, communities, and nations, which is necessarily dependent on the overexploitation of natural resources and the impoverishment of other individuals, communities, and nations (Arulmani, 2011; Plant, 2014). This has resulted in the marginalization of traditional occupations and livelihoods that are perceived as irrelevant in the knowledge economy, such as for example, engaging in sustainable agricultural production (Arulmani, 2011; Ratnam, 2014). Arulmani (2011) argues, therefore, for a cultural preparedness model of career guidance as an alternative to dominant notions of career development. In this model, youth are culturally prepared by their communities to develop particular kinds of attitudes and beliefs regarding work and occupation that may be inconsistent with those of modernist notions of appropriate career choices. For instance, a small business owner who provides services to a local community and is more or less self-sufficient may be pressured to expand their business, and to participate in a wider network in order to earn more money and/or to gain more visibility over a larger geography. Such a growth model may involve investing further in infrastructure and human resources and extracting these resources as much as possible to maximize the returns from the investment.

Plant (2014) offers a more collective and environmentally oriented form of career guidance in contrast to the contemporary western models of career guidance with its individualistic focus, and free-market thinking, that, in turn, can result in social and environmental destruction. He terms this approach “green guidance.” Green guidance involves the documentation of information on green careers (such as environmental law or sustainable agricultural practices), that is, work and career opportunities include environmental aspects and also minimize environmental harm. Further, it takes an educational role in creating awareness among students and youth about the importance of green careers, and the potential to “green” careers of interest. It also engages with educational institutions and employers to consider their impact on sustainability issues and to integrate these issues within their curricula and training. For instance, the Sustainable Development Goals is part of the 10th grade curriculum in civics and environmental science. Green guidance invites young people to reflect on what counts as decent work for themselves, for marginalized others in the present time as well as for future generations, and how they could find balance between work and other aspects of life to lead a sustainable way of life (Plant, 2014; Pouyaud & Guichard, 2017).

Attention to culture and social inequalities in relation to environmental concerns, however, need to be developed further in this “green guidance” approach. For instance, Arulmani (2011) reinterprets concepts such as *dharma* (i.e., code of duty or of “right living”) and *ashrama* (i.e., life stages with clearly defined duties at each stage) in Brahmanical epistemologies to explore what a culturally resonant and environmentally friendly career guidance might look like in the Indian context. Yet, these concepts effectively define Indian culture in Brahmanical terms. For instance, women and oppressed caste groups need to enact their *dharma*, that is, prescribed codes for work and living, in order to maintain and reproduce Brahmanical supremacy. This framework also tends to equate indigeneity with Brahmanism in

constructing a romanticized and harmonious relationship between indigenous communities in India and nature through work, an artifact of colonial as well as Brahmanical knowledge production in anthropology (Bhukya, 2008). Postcolonial, feminist, and Dalitbahujan epistemologies in the South Asian context argue for understanding culture as contested and negotiated (Arur & DeJaeghere, 2019; Paik, 2016; Rege, 2006; Waghmore, 2007). For instance, the neoliberal ideology of the Indian state is closely tied with political Brahmanism in promoting anti-environmental projects in different localities in India, which are often contested by SC and ST communities whose livelihoods are affected through such projects (Kumar & Puthumattathil, 2018). In the next section, therefore, we explain the sociocultural and critical approaches we used to conceptualize information literacies as a set of life skills needed in career guidance and planning for these contested contexts in which educating for sustainable development takes place.

Critically Analyzing Information Literacies

Information literacy, an important life skill, is often defined as the “careful retrieval and selection of information” to inform decision-making and emphasizes procedural knowledge as well as critical and meta-cognitive thinking to evaluate the “quality, authenticity, and credibility” of the information (Koltay, 2011, p. 215). Information literacy in practice, however, is applied to many different forms of information and contexts; thus, it is usually referred to as multiliteracies or as a metaliteracy (Mackey & Jacobson, 2011; Whitworth, 2014).

In this project, we examined multiliteracy skills, such as media literacy, digital literacy, and information literacy, and their applications in a specific communicative context or information landscapes. By using a multiliteracy approach, we assume that young people have an increasing need to engage with diverse communicative modes and media through which information travels (Boche, 2014; Whitworth, 2014).

Youth are embedded in different information landscapes — spaces “in which information is created and shared and eventually sediments as knowledge.... characterized by signs, symbols, artefacts, sayings and doings that define these spaces to its members and identify the boundaries of the environment to outsiders” (Lloyd, 2010, p. 9). Media, understood as artefacts, are actors that produce particular kinds of meanings. For instance, Facebook and LinkedIn afford and constrain access to different kinds of information, people, and identities that reflect the specific contexts from which they emerged.

One way of understanding multiliteracies in these different landscapes is through a sociocultural approach. This approach regards literacy as a socially situated practice, embedded within specific communities and shifting “according to context, purpose, and social relations” (Hamilton, 2016, p. 5; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Using this approach, we assume that youth have skills to navigate their landscapes; and we can map their literacy practices, or their “funds of knowledge” related to specific careers of interest and/or sustainable development issues (González et al., 2006). To this

perspective, we added a transformative analysis to mapping their information literacies. That is, we explore how unequal power relations shape the dominance and circulation of certain literacy practices over other forms such that they come to be seen as universal and standard (Janks, 2012; Lupton & Bruce, 2010). For instance, dominant information literacy practices may be about collecting career information from dominant caste networks, or from websites or magazines that rank the “best” colleges or “best” courses at national and international levels on the basis of criteria. Thus, a transformative approach to information literacy is about (re)distributing cognitive authority that is concentrated in particular dominant information sources, such as paid career information services and dominant caste social networks (Whitworth, 2014).

For this project, we conducted workshops that enabled youth to document their collective knowledge of career information embedded within their communities, and we engaged in a collective dialogue to scrutinize the credibility of this information. The aim was to help youth widen the distribution of authority they assign to career counsellors and educators to include community funds of knowledge that dominant information systems ignore. Using these frameworks, analyzing multiliteracy skills and usage can be “critical, consciousness-raising, subjective, political, empowering, and liberating” for young people (Lupton & Bruce, 2010, p. 5).

The Research Project

This research project emerged out of Sharma’s participation in a global think tank, the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Expert Network, and her leadership role at a career guidance for-profit company in India³ that served largely middle-class to elite students.

Given our interest in better understanding what it would mean to employ a sustainable development perspective in career guidance with non-elite Indian students, we conducted a single-sited exploratory qualitative research study at a government school for boys in Delhi, India with 10 boys studying in 10th grade who were first-generation learners living in unsafe and economically insecure neighborhoods. They were selected based on three different academic levels (identified in consultation with their class teacher) in order to explore how their career aspirations might be shaped by their academic performance. The site selection was informed by the experiences shared by a mentee of the ESD expert network, a young Muslim man who was raised in this neighborhood, and whose brother was studying in the same government school. He was already working in his neighborhood to encourage young boys to focus on their skill development and to not get drawn into groups that participated in violence. We hoped that the documentation and analyses from this

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³One Step Up Education Services Pvt. Ltd. is a for-profit start-up that provides career information and life skills education to mostly private English-medium schools in India (<https://onestepup.in/>).

study might help inform his and others' work on career guidance for young men living in unsafe neighborhoods.

It is important to note that the government school was not typical in that the secondary school did not employ government schoolteachers but rather fellows from a non-governmental organization (NGO), Teach India (TI) (pseudonym), who taught in the school for two years on a rotational basis. Our goal was to understand career guidance in this specific context, and not to generalize to other similar urban or government school environments. Our theoretical framework and methodology reflect this interest.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection process, following a sociocultural and transformational literacies framework to map and transform boys' multiliteracies landscapes, included multiple methods and were conducted sequentially in phases, with each subsequent phase being informed by the experiences and analysis of the previous phase. Data were collected in the following order: participation observation, individual interviews, an interactive session, student-created videos, and a second round of interviews with selected boys who had created videos. Students and parents were informed that participation was voluntary at every stage, and consent was given by students and their parents at every stage of the process.

Participant observations were conducted by Sharma, who volunteered at the school for a period of 3 months from November 2018 to January 2019 with the goal of understanding the school context from an emic perspective. Her voluntary work included largely teaching classes for 9th grade students. She interacted with the TI fellows and with boys in her class. These interactions enabled the authors to better situate the meanings of boys' articulations in relation to school life. This phase occurred before and along with the other data collection processes discussed below.

We conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews in a mix of Hindi and English, which ranged from 45 min to an hour. Most interviews were conducted by both authors in order to ensure consistency in questions, probes, and meaning-making across participants. We transcribed and translated the interviews into English, and then coded the data using Dedoose software.

After the semi-structured interviews, Sharma facilitated a career information workshop for the entire 10th grade class of 35 boys for 6 hours spread over two days. Data sources included a questionnaire to collect students' career interests and field notes. The workshop covered three themes: information literacy, career information, and networking. The workshop involved familiarizing students with authoritative sources of information used by careers educators that did not come up in earlier interviews, discussing differences between sources in terms of their credibility and relevance, sharing career-related information collated from authoritative sources of information specific to interest areas identified by students in a questionnaire, an open session inviting students' specific questions, and lastly, activities

related to collating students' information sources embedded within their specific social networks related to careers discussed in the previous session.

From the semi-structured interviews, we learned that most students had access to a phone camera, either directly (owning) or indirectly (borrowing from the family members), and a few students had already used phone cameras to make videos on themes relating to the SDGs for leisure. Hence, we explored further how the students' use of the visual medium acted as a mode for both mapping and redefining their information landscape within the context of career planning and/or the SDGs. For this purpose, we invited the entire class of 35 students to, over the course of a week, observe and document on video any SDG issues they would like addressed in their immediate environment. They were invited to experiment with the format of this video. Six students among the 35 students shot videos. The themes included poverty, gender discrimination, and natural resource management. We conducted detailed follow-up interviews with three students who submitted videos. These interviews were conducted with the aim to understand the connections that students made between their respective careers of interest, local sustainable development issues, and how these related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Data Analysis

We coded interview data initially using the ESD competency framework. We then focused on the data that were coded in relation to information literacy skills specifically and conducted a second round of coding using the critical information literacies framework. We then selected excerpts from the data that illustrate these themes for further contextual analysis in the paper. In the next section, we map the career information landscapes that emerged from boys' information literacy practices.

Boys' Information Literacy Practices and Career Information Landscapes

In this section, we document boys' information literacy practices and the career information landscapes that emerged in our findings. We also illustrate the use of specific SDGs such as SDG 3 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and the SDG framework as a whole to orient boys' information literacy practices, and render particular aspects of their career information landscapes more visible. Our analysis includes (a) a mapping of boys' information sources and their processes of assigning cognitive authority to these sources; (b) a mapping of the asymmetrical topographies of their career information landscapes, first in terms of how these were gendered, and second, how they were differentiated by caste, ethnicity and class; (c) examining boys' media production activities as they mapped local SD issues; and (d) exploring the connections made between these different information landscapes.

Mapping Boys' Information Sources and Processes of Assigning Cognitive Authority

Broadly, the boys sourced their career information from the internet and from individuals with relevant experience. They assigned more cognitive authority to individuals with experience to discern the credibility of the information that they acquired from the internet. Individuals with relevant experiences often were the Teach India (TI) fellows who were currently teaching them or had previously taught them in school; parents, siblings or other influential family members; tuition teachers or individuals from other non-governmental organizations that they were associated with; and certain influencers within their neighborhood. We discuss boys' engagement with each of these different sources in the following paragraphs.

All students mentioned relying on the internet to search for career-related information. They mentioned searching on Google and Youtube the most frequently, and none of them named specific primary or secondary online sources of career information. The boys' access to information and communications technologies (ICT) was varied. Most of them said they accessed the internet through mobile phones, usually those of their parents, and did not have access to a laptop or computer at home. Hence, the boys often had to negotiate with their parents to use mobile phones for short periods of time. For example, Gautam's ICT use was often incumbent on whether his parents were in a "good mood":

9 o' clock for half an hour or 1 hour, I study what's done in school or whatever I feel like. After that, I have dinner. Then, I ask my parents, if their mood is good, they give me their phone when I ask them. Then I check the phone. I log on to Facebook, chat, check any messages, reply. Then, I sleep.

Thus, their information literacies were mediated not only by parents' material access to technology, such as a smartphone and a laptop or computer, but also students' social access to these tools, meaning their ability to negotiate with parents to interact with the technology, learn it, and navigate it.

The boys spoke about using platforms such as Google and YouTube to search for general information, as well as for career-related information, with familiarity. For example, Deepak describes how he used Google to source career-related information:

Deepak: First of all, I'll search on Google. After Google, I'll ask the [TI] fellows.

Interviewer: Any specific website?

Deepak: Not a specific website, I'll put it straight in Google. Then I'll confirm with the [TI] fellows. I'll ask them and ask them if it's true or not. I'll share the link with them to make sure it's not fraud. Then they verify and tell me whether this is right or wrong. Otherwise I'll ask previous fellows. They know a lot about these things. I'll ask them.

Thus, Deepak, like many of the other boys, did not trust the cognitive authority of information accessed through the net, and assigned cognitive authority to

individuals with experience within his physical network from school to validate the information. Most boys had mastered the generic skills of searching and categorizing information. They had also used their sociocultural knowledge to assess the relevance of the information they had collected, and to determine its credibility.

Boys also depended significantly on trusted individuals with experience within their own families or neighborhoods for information. Most boys mentioned that they sought guidance from TI fellows, especially the men who had taught them earlier but were no longer associated with the school. The boys still actively maintained contact with these fellows through phone or social media like Facebook. For instance, Kabir said that the idea of doing law came from his conversations with one of the TI fellows: “A lot of *bhaiyas* [brother referring to TI fellows] had come to teach in school... So, I got a lot of inspiration from them... Like Jeet *bhaiya*, he was a lawyer. He used to teach us very well.” Similarly, Karan too referred to these TI fellows as inspirations to study law, “There was Jeet and Abhay *bhaiya* – they spoke a lot about law and then I got interested and inspired.” Whereas several boys’ interests in particular careers were inspired by TI fellows’ educational profiles, Prem spoke about getting advice from a TI fellow about pursuing a career in sports based on his understanding of its labor market potential:

So Sudhanshu *bhaiya* had counselled me that you have to pick up one thing and then dedicate yourself to it. If you are joining the [sports] academy, then do that night and day. But try and not leave your studies right now. There are *lakhs* (hundreds of thousand) of students who are playing and they still don’t get selected. If you are not able to make it, and you have also left your studies, you will be completely stranded. So I now go for inter-zone or school level matches.

Apart from TI fellows, boys also sought information and guidance from tuition teachers, people within their neighborhoods, and older siblings. Parents, too, were sources of information for particular careers. For example, Kabir’s father wanted him to get into the police services, which prompted him to do some research related to this career. He was preparing himself for this career in terms of building his fitness by doing exercise frequently, as physical training is an important component of the training program in the police services. He also revealed to us later that he harbored a desire to pursue performing arts like acting and singing. He had learned from a peer that the National Institute of Drama was an institute where he could pursue this career. His participation in a community-based theater education activity also appeared to have influenced his desire to pursue this career. In addition, he was also considering studying law inspired by TI fellows who were lawyers. Although Kabir remained undecided regarding his career goals, his information landscape revealed a richness dotted by multiple influential actors with different kinds of experiences.

Other sources of information included people within their familial networks or neighborhoods who have had experience pursuing particular careers. For instance, Prashant’s sister’s friend gave the exam for the National Defense Academy, while Gautam’s neighbor was undergoing training to become a flight attendant, and from whom he had gathered credible information. Indeed, almost all participants assigned more cognitive authority to people who had experience in a particular career over

information collected online or in textbooks. Students' networks influenced their career aspirations, the information they searched for, as well as their evaluations of the credibility of information they acquired on the net. These sources provided a form of local, culturally-specific knowledge about careers that framed the horizons of possibility for them in their environments.

Students demonstrated resourcefulness in learning digital skills with limited access to resources. For instance, Gaurav had independently learned photography, Vfx (visual effects), and photo editing skills by observing others in the same field, and helped others who needed his skills. Rahul, who didn't have access to a laptop, had learned how to create Powerpoint presentations on the phone. He had even created a presentation on careers in humanities for his class.

In sum, these young boys developed technical and digital skills through their participation in local networks and made use of local knowledge that was culturally relevant within their networks to make decisions related to their career aspirations.

Mapping the Asymmetrical Topographies or "Bumps": Gendering the Labor Market Information Landscape

Boys sourced information from the human and non-human, i.e., internet, actors in their network, and validated the credibility of information by assigning cognitive authority to particular sources more than others. Using a critical information literacy perspective, we wanted to understand how the asymmetrical topographical features, or "bumps", of their otherwise flat information landscape were shaped by unequal power relations, including their understanding of gender- and caste-segregated labor markets.

Almost all the boys recognized gender differences in work opportunities. Karan, who we noted earlier wanted to study law based on his interactions with male TI fellows, shared his observations around how educational opportunities were gendered:

Mostly around me, in my society, girls don't study much. Mostly, their choice is to take up Arts. They may want to do business. They feel they have more options in Arts. But, I feel, to a large extent, their parents don't let them study too much. Maximum, in my society, 5-10 families only allow their girls to study. There's quite a lot of discrimination.... Mostly boys also take up Arts. Nobody thinks about Science or Commerce. They think that commerce and science require more hard work. All of them [take up Arts], 100%.

In Karan's information landscape, Arts was perceived as having more options with relatively less effort as compared to Science and Commerce for both boys and girls. He also revealed the gendered topography of his information landscape in noting the differentiated opportunities that girls had with respect to studying further. While Gaurav reiterated Karan's observations regarding differentiated opportunities for

girls, he described the complex relationship that boys have to education and work in his community as well:

Gaurav: Girls, only some girls study more. But, most leave studies at some point. Some fail. In my tuitions, there was this topper girl, she studied science. Everyone else gets married after 12th. Very few study. Most leave. Those who study do so through the open system [correspondence or distance education]... What I've seen is that some of the boys around me did exceedingly well. Whereas, there are few more people who, even with the education, didn't do much – they are only at home. There is one *bhaiya* who did LLB (Bachelor of Law) but somehow didn't do anything after that. He has been at home for the last 1-2 years... They themselves don't want to work. Their parents are earning so they don't want to ... They just want to be at home and go to the gym. The environment is such. Everyone I know is just 'gymming.'

Interviewer: The ones who do well- what kind of work do they do?

Gaurav: They go to the office, sit on the computer and do data analysis.

Within Gaurav's information landscape, as in other boys', certain jobs signified success, such as working in an office or with a computer. But he also pointed to a curious phenomenon around young men being inclined towards "gymming," which hints at the circulation of particular constructs of masculinity within this landscape. These constructs would need to be explored further, particularly, if as Gaurav suggested, they also shaped a resistance towards finding conventional work.

Prem, who expressed his desire to be a sportsman, wasn't particularly interested in studies. He talked about his conversations with a TI fellow and others about the risks of pursuing a career in the sports at the cost of leaving studies. His strategy was to just do well enough in studies to be able to enter the Army so that he could continue to play. His older sister, on the other hand, was planning to become a Chartered Accountant and had support from his parents in this endeavor. He commented that:

It's upside down these days, girls are supported more... Because of this, boys are getting spoilt. There's not much attention paid to them. There's this fixed thinking from before about boys that people have. Boys are like this only, they won't do anything. They'll keep roaming around. Girls are sincere, and study properly – let's educate them and do more for them.

Although Prem believed that he had gotten attention from within his family, he was concerned that gender perceptions were shifting more favorably towards girls as compared to boys regarding educational opportunities in his neighborhood.

In sum, exploring how gender differentiated work opportunities offered texture to the information landscapes of young boys. Moreover, these conversations can be a useful starting point for discussing gendered desires, masculinity, and changing gender norms that are the focus of SDG 4 (Gender Equality).

Caste, Ethnicity, and Socioeconomic Differentiation of the Career Information Landscape

Most of the boys in this study were first-generation learners from lower middle-class socio-economic backgrounds. They did not have to work to support their families, and their fathers were security guards or small grocery shop-owners. Many were also migrants from elsewhere such as the states of Bihar, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, as well as Nepal. While most of the boys were quite attuned to the gender differentiation of the world of work, the caste-based organization of the labor market was less visible to many of them. Instead, most of them tended to see work opportunities as being shaped by the power acquired through an accumulation of economic capital. For instance, Prashant, who belonged to the Brahmin caste (dominant caste group), noted:

There is [a difference in opportunity between rich and poor]. If there is conflict in our localities, then people who are rich intimidate and threaten by paying off cops. There is a difference. Even in getting jobs. Some people cannot afford the college fees that are high.

Here, Prashant articulated his understanding of how money has been used to secure power as well as opportunities for education and work through observations in his locality. Only a few, such as Prem, highlighted the historical relationships between particular caste identities and the work that they do. Prem belongs to the Garhwali community and the Rajput (dominant caste group) caste.

Prem: Many Garhwali people head to the army or go to the kitchen line or as tourist drivers. I have seen this mostly....

Interviewer: How does caste or religion affect work opportunities? Like you said Garhwalis are more suited for certain jobs?

Prem: You can't exactly say that they are suited or not for certain jobs but they themselves take more interest in this. It may seem a bit odd to the ear. But they have been in the profession for long, and even the ancestors have been working in the same area. For example, Valmikis [Dalits, that is, an oppressed caste group]. I have a lot of friends and know a lot of people. The ladies of the families are sweepers in MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi). So, mainly the ladies do a lot of the cleaning work.... Pandits [Brahmin Hindu priests] I have seen. Those who sit in the temple. They are told by their fathers to not eat meat but they anyway go and do it.

Prem's career information came from the historical knowledge embedded within his specific caste and regional community. Indeed, the Garhwali Rifles is an infantry regiment in the Indian Army that is predominantly made up of Rajput and Brahmin castes from the Garhwali community (Sharma, 1990). Prem knew several people in his Garhwali community who had entered the army, and thus, was culturally prepared for a career in the army (Arulmani, 2011). He aspired to enter the army also

so that he could continue to pursue his passion for sports. Importantly, Prem clarified that people from particular identities do not tend to work in particular fields because they are “suited” for it, thus problematizing a casteist understanding of a naturalized relationship between caste and occupation. Yet, he pointed out that even though people of particular identities appeared to take an interest in particular fields, this did not imply choice, but rather it is a historically constituted predisposition towards particular kinds of work. He gave examples from his observations around caste and gender differentiated occupations, such as women from the Valmiki community working as public sweepers and cleaners, and Brahmin men working as priests in temples. But he also recognized that “interests” and “suitability” or “choices” are shaped historically through caste-based differentiation of people and labor.

Although boys appeared to be relatively unfamiliar with the caste-based organization of work, possibly because many of them belonged to upper caste groups themselves (in part because we did not stratify our sample using caste as a criterion), examples such as those above form a rich information base from which to explore the issue in greater depth as a group in a careers education classroom. The dialogue that ensues from the collection of such information could allow for a dialogical understanding of the labor market, how it impacts them and members of their class differentially, and what it means to address SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) within their local context.

Producing Videos to Reveal Local Inequalities

In today’s information society, attention is a valuable resource. The process of acquiring multiliteracy skills requires that students’ attention is drawn towards certain aspects, such as particular technologies of communication (Norris & Jones, 2005). The media production activity oriented towards mapping local sustainable development issues thus offered an opportunity for students to focus their attention towards certain patterned interactions between human and non-human actors in their information landscapes, and heighten their and our awareness towards these aspects.

Six students shot videos on their phones capturing issues of homelessness, natural resource management, sanitation, gender inequity, and hooliganism. In some of the videos, students engaged their families and friends in making the videos. In one video, Jeet involved his mother and sister in reconstructing a fictional scene of the lived experiences of everyday discrimination where his mother stops his sister from studying, thus rendering visible to us this tension around girls’ education that constitutes a bump or a conflict within his information landscape. Other students ventured out to focus their attention towards familiar spaces within their environment to articulate their concern for SDGs, such as a nearby barren park or homeless people sleeping on the streets. Ravi shot a video of his daily morning routine to fill buckets of fresh water owing to the lack of running water facilities in his

community. In making the video, Ravi recognized the community water tap as an important actor in his information landscape, rendering it visible for us with its situated meanings. Specifically, he used this tap to highlight water wastage as people do not turn it off. He connected the documentation of this tap to his aspiration of becoming a journalist, and of how he could report on stories from the margins and cover issues of environment and development:

Ravi: There is a lot of water scarcity.. water gets wasted.. we don't get water for many days. We have to get water from very far. Cleanliness is also a big issue. There is a big pile of garbage.. there is a very bad smell.. also diseases. [...]

Interviewer: What do you understand by sustainability?

Ravi: Development for all, I feel this means, development for all people. Poor rich, middle class... or development without any harm. For everyone there should be development, he or she is for poor, rich, any economic background, and they feel that they are improving. Their needs are getting fulfilled. Then we can use media for bringing development for them, make awareness videos, like we use our channel vines for making awareness videos. Maybe if we do that, then there is development for not just my own self but for others also.

Illustrating the concept of “green careers”, Ravi was able to make the connections between persisting environmental issues and how they intersect with class inequities, with his career aspiration of becoming a journalist that might expose these injustices. He believed that the media underrepresents issues of the poor. However, to his admission, he was mainly informed by popular depictions of journalists in mainstream media.

I don't watch that much news. I watch a lot of movies in which journalists run after famous people to get important news. It's a bit weird but I guess it is important. I guess they have been told to do this by their bosses. [...] It's not important to only ask famous people. Maybe if we talk to the poor people they will have much more information to give. They may talk about how their need is not getting fulfilled. We don't need to ask only rich people about development. Maybe we will get to know more about this from poor people, whose needs are not fulfilled. So, we can do something.

Ravi, along with his classmates, had been creating videos to raise awareness of social issues they found relevant. One of Ravi's classmates, Kabir, shared with us details on videos they had produced before the start of our research project:

Interviewer: On what themes do you make vine videos?

Kabir: On social issues. Like we did one on dengue. In Dengue, we made like, you must wear full-sleeved clothes. Like we had a friend. He'd always wear t-shirts. We used to tell him, why are you wearing t-shirts, nowadays mosquitoes are biting a lot. So, he says a dialogue. Then he says a dialogue that he won't wear [t-shirts]. Then we're on a playground. He suddenly gets dizzy and he can't

see anything. He asks how many balls are these? 1 or 2. Then we ask, say how many fingers are these. He says 3. We tell him it's only one finger. Then he faints. Then we take him to the hospital. He has dengue. Then the doctor talks.

Interviewer: What made you think of making a video on this?

Kabir: Little funny type, so that people get information and enjoy it also [I wanted to make a funny video that is informative but also one that people will enjoy]

Above, Kabir described the plot of a short story they created around a social issue. As mentioned earlier, Kabir had told us that he was interested in singing and acting and wanted to apply to the National School of Drama. When asked about how he could green a singing career, he suggested that music could include rap about social issues.

In summary, boys used phone cameras to document sustainable development issues within their neighborhoods, and further, to explore how they could green their career aspirations by connecting them with issues pertinent to their everyday lives. The use of this media to document local realities opened up the possibility for the development of their critical/transformational information literacy skills; they acquired some cognitive authority through the production of their own knowledge, rather than consuming other people's knowledge. They also circulated their own knowledge, and conducted a dialogue around specific local issues that matter to them.

Transforming Career Information Landscapes Through Collective Sharing

In the career information workshop held over two days, we utilized a transformative approach to expanding boys' information literacy skills through a collective mapping of the students' and our career information landscapes. Engaging with students' situated knowledge about specific labor markets in a collective manner in the workshop served to redistribute cognitive authority from the career guidance practitioner to the students themselves, as well as from the students' caste-specific networks to one that is potentially shared by the class as a whole.

Students engaged with the career educator's toolkits to collect career information which included primary sources of information like university websites, secondary sources like websites offering a collated and filtered layer of career information, and stories of career successes drawn from personal or online social networks. In contrast to a deficit perspective where one would simply pour in additional information assuming students' lack of access to authentic information sources, we employed a transformative information literacy framework by inviting students to critically evaluate these different sources for their credibility and authenticity, and compare these sources with their own, thus facilitating a redistribution of cognitive authority

from the career educator to themselves. For example, students shared how they often sought videos of people offering information on their professional journeys on social media. Amar, one of the boys in the classroom, spoke about how he had gathered information on the centralized civil services exam by watching a video of someone who had excelled in the examination on Youtube. This allowed Amar to redistribute cognitive authority from individuals with professional experience within his physical contexts to actors in his virtual network, affording him the possibility of leveraging these virtual actors as critical sources of knowledge and cognitive authority in negotiating his career choice with his family members.

In another session, students shared the various careers that they were interested in. In addition to the career educator sharing information on entrance procedures related to various careers, students also discussed linkages between these careers. For instance, the question of how one can become a Youtube influencer was linked to skills of media production, and potentially to careers in film-making or journalism. Further, students evaluated the credibility and authenticity of the information on entrance procedures provided by the career educator, concluding that this knowledge was secondary and needed to be validated using other sources.

Most importantly, students discussed various ways of building their social networks. Together, they reflected on and analyzed current and anticipated hurdles that might limit their ability to reach out and build a professional network. The solutions too were discussed collaboratively. The session created a space for the boys to name and discuss shared inhibitions of reaching out to professionals, and to devise creative solutions to handle them together. For instance, each of them listed the number of professionals they knew from the list of selected careers. When seen collectively, they found that they had access to a wider and richer network than as individuals.

In this collective discussion, they became aware that they had named careers that were aspirational but within reach—these were careers they would aspire to it only if they knew someone in that profession. The cognitive authority of individuals with experience was reaffirmed in this session, as they offered the students not just credible career information but also shaped their ambitions for particular career choices. Role models are not new in their presence as cognitive authorities for youth making career choices; however, in this case, interestingly, this authority was also in part shared by influencers, or those not personally known to the boys, in social media networks. We observed this trend as students expressed a desire to work in several media related careers, such as Youtube influencers, fitness models, actors, and singers.

In sum, our findings suggest that the career information workshop was not about passing down information from the career educator to the students, nor was it about teaching students technical information literacy skills. Informed by a transformative information literacy approach, it went beyond engaging with students' sociocultural information literacies towards a collective mapping of their information landscapes with the goal of facilitating a dialogue among them.

Discussion

One of the biggest challenges for career counselors and educators is to constantly document, update, and validate career information that is both continuously increasing and changing for certain demographics, and sparse for other demographics (Hooley, 2012; Kumar & Arulmani, 2014). At the same time, they have to also empower students to develop information literacy skills that include not only technological skills to search, select, and organize information but also to analyze, validate, and process it to inform decision-making. Career educators working with youth from socio-economic backgrounds that are different from their own, and particularly with those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are likely to make assumptions about their information literacy skills from a deficit perspective. Using sociocultural theories of literacy practices, we learned that the boys had already developed technical skills to use information and communications technologies (ICT), such as social media platforms like Whatsapp and Facebook, in varied and creative ways. For instance, they used ICT to expand and stay connected with their networks, to consume popular culture in Hindi and English on YouTube, to create vine videos on social and environmental issues of interest, to learn Vfx (visual effects) photo editing skills, and to make presentations. Importantly, they demonstrated negotiation skills to acquire social access to smartphones, which were shared resources in their families as only a few boys had access to a computer.

We mapped students' information sources— both online and offline—that shaped their interests and motivations in non-deterministic ways. Evaluating the credibility of information from various sources is an important aspect of information literacy. The boys often assigned cognitive authority to individuals with experience in particular fields or careers to validate their information, and they did not depend necessarily or entirely on information received from online sources whose cognitive authority could be dubious. Thus, boys distributed cognitive authority across their social networks within their neighborhoods, schools, and online spaces, bringing these sources in interaction with each other. Hence, their career interests were re-shaped by a polyphonic career information landscape.

Situating the information literacy skills of both career educators and youth within a sustainable development perspective, and specifically the SDGs that attend to reducing inequalities, orients them in critical ways to make informed decisions around what information to look for, how to validate it, and process it towards whose ends. Using data from how youth think about issues related to sustainable development and their futures, we were able to explore the bumps in an otherwise flattened career information landscape. For instance, the SDG 4 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (reduced inequalities) framed our explorations to find that most boys, except for a few, had a limited information literacy skills regarding the caste-based differentiation of the labor market, whereas most boys' information landscapes regarding how gender and socioeconomic differences unequally shaped opportunities for education and work represented a more complex and textured, or what we termed “bumpy”, landscape of the interaction and conflict among multiple actors.

For instance, many boys felt that girls had fewer opportunities to study further, while a few felt that gendered perceptions were shifting in favor of girls and particular negative perceptions related to boys were harming them. These kinds of conflicts or bumps could potentially be crucial entry points for deeper conversations and dialogues on the meanings of masculinity in relation to particular kinds of education and work.

Similarly, the media production activities created an opportunity for establishing a “slightly different awareness” and “sensitivity” towards their local realities with the goal of highlighting particular sustainable development issues relevant to them (Decuyper et al., 2019, p. 12). For instance, students noted a range of issues such as the wastage of water, gender inequalities, and health-related issues. Further, students made connections between their local realities and their careers of interest such that they illustrated what “greening” careers meant to them in specific, culturally relevant ways. These student-created media products empowered students to mobilize their funds of knowledge. They also afforded opportunities for career educators to facilitate dialogues with and among students about what these issues meant to them personally and as members of communities, and what actions would be needed as individuals and more importantly, as a collective, to reconfigure their realities.

The transformative approach to information literacy affords the possibility for careers educators to map young people’s rich information landscapes. These information landscapes can become the basis for co-designing with youth a culturally relevant, dynamic, and collectively validated information system. The career information workshop constituted a site of engagement, that is, a specific moment in time and space in which the boys’ and our (or career counselors) social histories converged and mediated particular actions related to career aspirations (Norris & Jones, 2005). In co-mapping the various informational actors regarding specific careers, the boys were able to (re)distribute cognitive authority from the career counselor as an expert to include their own funds of knowledge. Further, students mapped individuals with experience within their social networks regarding the careers discussed in class as a collective. In doing so, students widened the distribution of the cognitive authority beyond their individual networks, and such individuals could now serve as potential resources for the entire collective.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have illustrated how the SDGs can be deployed in the context of career guidance to help students develop relevant life skills toward a meaningful career path. Elsewhere, career guidance scholars and practitioners have deployed the SDGs to help students find personal meaning in their lives (Rochat & Masdonati, 2019). There is, however, a danger in using this approach in a deterministic manner in a world that is unknowable and rapidly changing. Sustainability education can also promote anxiety in part due to a loss of meaning produced by the unknowable and unpredictable quality of our futures, and of the geographical spaces that we live

in due to neoliberal practices and globalization (Ojala, 2016). The coronavirus pandemic is a glaring instance of how our relationship to space (staying at home) and time (disruption of routines) has been reconfigured in different ways for different groups of people within a span of a few weeks, and whose impact will be felt for much longer, particularly for youth. The pandemic, shaped by globalization, has triggered a global economic crisis and has significantly affected job markets, producing much anxiety for young people. Hence, we suggest that the SDGs can serve as a compass to orient practitioners' and youths' information literacy practices as they navigate the tensions, contradictions, and existential anxieties that emerge in their career information landscapes (Decuyper et al., 2019; Ojala, 2016). The role of career counselors and educators, thus, would involve empowering youth to collect and process information, and their emotional responses to it, in order to prepare youth to negotiate existential anxieties for an uncertain future.

To conclude, this study contributes to an understanding of career information literacy skills from a sociocultural and transformative approach. Such an approach is different from technical approaches to information literacy skills, which positions career educators as cognitive authorities that provide students and youth who are lacking these skills with valid and legitimate career information. This unequal relationship is disempowering for career educators and students alike. While career educators are put under stress to constantly update their knowledge base in a rapidly changing world, students' cultural knowledge remains unacknowledged, even though such knowledge crucially shapes their career aspirations and choices. A transformative approach builds on the culturally preparedness model of career guidance (Arulmani, 2011) as it aims to recognize students' socially situated career information literacy skills. Importantly, it facilitates students' critical reflections on how their career information landscapes are shaped by unequal power relations, and how they might collectively transform these landscapes. For instance, a young boy may reflect on how his career aspiration is shaped by his caste network and his gendered relationship to particular kinds of work. He may further engage with the career information landscapes beyond his immediate familial and caste networks to consider alternative opportunities for work, and in turn share his cultural resources with his peers. Our engagement with young boys has also suggested that particular constructs of masculinity might be influencing how they (dis)engage with studies, and how they align themselves towards particular kinds of work. It would be crucial for career educators to understand in further depth how boys make sense of and negotiate shifting gender norms as they make particular choices for work.

Future research and practice should engage students to reflect on how caste and gender have unequally shaped their career aspirations and opportunities with each other. This study further encourages a dialogue about what students can do individually and collectively to transform these unequal opportunity structures. Transformative information literacy skills are crucial life skills that career guidance practitioners and youth need to develop in dialogue with and among each other in order to design a culturally relevant, dynamic, collectively validated information system, and help young people consider meaningful and sustainable futures.

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