

Jiva: A non-Western Approach to Career Guidance for the Preparation of a Future-Ready Workforce
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The relevance of career counselling to the Indian context becomes sharper against the background of economic reforms that have led to India becoming one of the fastest developing economies. Career guidance that is sensitive to a region's economic and cultural realities, offered at high school, can lay the foundations for the creation of a future-ready workforce. To achieve this objective, career guidance must move beyond a psychometric, aptitude testing approach and be viewed as a pedagogical activity that educates students in the skills of life long career decision making. Further, if career guidance is to be brought to scale, the service must be anchored to a comprehensive, culturally resonant model of career development. One such approach is the *Jiva model of career and livelihood planning*, an internationally acclaimed system of career education developed for India by experts at The Promise Foundation, India. Drawing upon Eastern values and thought, Jiva takes a non-Western approach to the theory and practice of career guidance. Describing the Jiva model, this paper presents outcome and impact data pertaining to the effectiveness of the model. The paper argues that in order to be effective, interventions for career development must be based on culturally grounded mechanisms that resonate with individuals' enculturated ways of living.

Key words: Jiva, non-Western, culture, career guidance, pedagogical, intervention

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Introduction

Over the last few years India has made important policy decisions pertaining to workforce development (e.g., Skill India). However, persisting discrepancies in person-course fit and person-job fit affect the optimisation of these initiatives in the long run. Career guidance that is sensitive to a region's economic and cultural realities, offered at high school can support the early development of career management skills. To achieve this objective career guidance must move beyond aptitude tests and be viewed as a pedagogical activity that educates students in the skills of life long career decision making. Further, if career guidance is to be brought to scale it is essential that consistency and replicability are built into the service. This requires the service to be anchored to a comprehensive, culturally resonant model of career guidance and a trained workforce.

The Jiva Model is an internationally acclaimed system of career education developed for India by experts at The Promise Foundation, India. The programme is designed to provide students with career development skills as well as the vocabulary and cognitive preparedness to take personal responsibility for their futures. The objective is not merely to match individuals to jobs but to teach skills and empower students at the high school level for the lifelong of self-mediation of the labour market. One of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals states: "Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. ND). Having a job is vital. However as indicated by the International Labour Organisation "...merely having a job doesn't guarantee the ability to escape from poverty. This slow and uneven progress requires us to rethink and retool our economic and social policies aimed at eradicating poverty" (International Labour Organisation, 2022.)

Development of the Jiva Approach to Career and Livelihood Planning

Jiva is a career guidance system developed for non-Western cultures with particular reference to India. The intervention is based on strong research foundations and was developed in two phases with the intention of bringing career and livelihood planning into the national mainstream. Given below is an overview of how *Jiva* evolved.

Phase 1: Survey and Collation of Base Line Data

Jiva is based on a strong evidence base that emerged from a comprehensive survey – Work Orientations and Responses to Career Choices (WORCC-IRS), conducted in 12 different parts of India, in 8 different languages, covering a sample of close to 10,000 Indian young people, parents, teachers and other connected with youth (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2005).

This survey generated a robust data base pertaining to young people's orientations to work and livelihoods and provided deep insights into the career choice process in India.

Phase 2: National Consultation on Career Psychology (NCCP)

In a first for the country, the National Consultation of Career Psychology (NCCP) was convened in Bangalore, India, with the intention of presenting the findings of the WORCC-IRS to key stakeholders. The consultation was attended by leading social scientists, educators, psychologists, youth workers as well as parents and children. Participants also included representatives from the National Council for Research and Training (NCERT), International Labour Organisation and UNICEF. Intensive discussions were held over 2 days with a view to developing recommendations for the creation of a career guidance system for the country. The consultation led to the following five key recommendations:

Five Key Recommendations

- Use the WORCC-IRS findings to develop culturally validated teaching-learning material for careers education suitable for the Indian context.
- Develop a skilled workforce to deliver career counselling services around the country by creating training programmes at the certificate, diploma and degree levels of qualification.
- Develop suitable, culturally grounded teaching-learning material for the transaction of career development activities.
- Develop the intervention in as many Indian languages as possible.
- Draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of career counselling.

These recommendations guided the development of the Jiva method of career guidance.

Key Constructs of the Jiva Approach to Career and Livelihood Planning

Jiva is a “system” of career guidance. that is based on a set of interlocking theoretical, statistical and data-based concepts.

Theoretical Frameworks

Jiva draws upon the following theoretical frameworks:

Life Span Approaches to Human Development

The Lifespan Developmental Approaches provide a broad framework for understanding human development from conception to the end of life where development is influenced both by biological and environmental forces. As Super (1980) pointed out Jiva views career development is a continuously progressing process that includes both advances and losses all through the lifecycle resulting in a multidimensional, multidirectional and multifunctional perspective.

Social Cognitive Theory

Beliefs shared by the individuals of a community may cohere into behaviour patterns that define reality for each individual in that community (Arbib & Hesse, 1986; Bandura. 1986).

Accordingly, Jiva works with patterns of career beliefs prevalent in a community and helps individuals become aware of how such beliefs affect their career choices and their self-efficacy for career planning.

Cultural Preparedness

Arulmani (2014) postulates that the cultural forces of enculturation, cultural learning and acculturation work together to define a cultural preparedness equilibrium within communities. Accordingly, individuals are prepared by their communities to engage with life in a particular manner. In one community individuals may be enculturated to believe that career is mainly for boys and not so much for girls, or, certain careers (e.g., medicine, engineering) are the “best” careers. Career guidance interventions therefore, can be positive acculturative influences that create a new cultural equilibrium for the development of future-ready workforce.

Interventional Constructs

Jiva has drawn from the theoretical constructs described above to create a framework for the development of data driven, culturally grounded interventions. Jiva’s key interventional constructs are described below.

A Values Based Approach

Jiva is grounded upon Eastern cultural values. The word Jiva means “life” in most Indian languages. The Jiva approach to career counselling is based on the premise that a healthy career is integrally connected with one’s life. Jiva is based on four career development values that have been interpreted from Asian cultures.

The Jiva Spiral: A Non-Linear Approach to Career Development. Ancient Indian philosophy presents a cyclical approach to life. Drawing upon this principal Jiva uses the image of a spiral to describe development. During the Jiva workshop participants learn that nature is full of examples of spirals ranging from the structure of galaxies, to the shell of a snail and the blossoming of a rose bud. Through various Jiva activities children discuss the fact that rarely does a career develop in a linear and sequential manner. It has its ups and downs and grows with the individual. A healthy career develops upon previous development, whereby one constantly learns from the past and looks to the future, all through one’s life.

The Jiva Tick Mark: Assess Before you Accept. Young people today are under immense pressure to make the “right” career choice. Stress and emotions run high. Indian philosophy exhorts the individual to exercise objectivity and practice dispassion (nishkama) when making decisions. Jiva interprets this to point out that the nature of economic development today, presents the Indian young person with innumerable opportunities. This does not mean that just because an opportunity exists it should be taken. Career development requires the skill to weigh up pros and cons and then accept or reject. Jiva lays the foundations for students to develop a critical attitude toward career choice.

Green and blue: A Healthy Career is Green and Blue. The Jiva colours are green and blue, where blue is taken as a symbol of the sky and green as being a symbol of the earth. Another principle we see in nature is interdependence. The work done by one organism provides sustenance for other organisms in web of interrelatedness. By contrast, human work has been exploitative, not only of the environment, but also of other human beings. Career by

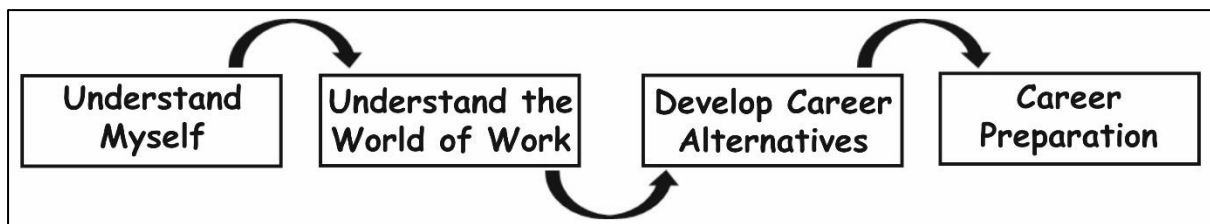
its very nature implies promotion of the self. Yet, the healthy practice of a career lies in the interface between garnering of personal gain on the one hand and services rendered to society on the other hand. Sensitivity to the 'other' is a deeply valued Indian concept. Jiva interprets this into a career development principle that sharpens the young person's sensitivity to the environment and to human relationships.

The Changing and the Unchanged: Healthy Career Development Allows Change with Stability. Indian philosophers describe the cosmos as a paradox of change and constancy. Jiva sensitises the young person to the fact that the individual is growing and changing, while the world of work is also changing with new opportunities constantly emerging. A career develops in finding the balance between what changes and what does not change. Personal interests for example, are liable to change while aptitudes are deeper traits and therefore are more stable.

Career Discovery Path

The Jiva approach to career guidance comprises four interlocking themes referred to as the Career Discovery Path, which is schematically described in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. The Career Discovery Path



Understanding Myself. In the absence of career counselling, the young person's natural instinct is to make a career choice based on what is most attractive and or popular. Such choices are often influenced by prevailing career beliefs and attitudes. Effective career counselling begins by helping the young person become more self-aware. The Jiva model views self-understanding for effective career decision-making as focussing on the following themes:

- Personal interests, desires and motivations.
- Personal talents and aptitudes.
- Personal cognitions, values and beliefs about work and career.

Discovering oneself is the beginning of discovering one's career.

Understanding the World of Work. The world of work comprises all the different career opportunities open before the young person. Career choices are often limited to the careers that the young person knows or has heard about. Facilitating an understanding of the world of work widens the young career chooser's horizons and helps develop skills to plot educational pathways. A fundamental objective here is to help the young person learn to interrogate a career before committing to it.

Career Alternatives. The next step in the career education process is closely connected with decision-making skills. During this part of the Jiva intervention, the career

aspirant arrives at a set of careers that he/she would be most comfortable with and for which his/her interests and aptitudes are best suited – these are his/her Career Alternatives. Career Alternatives are a set of two to three options that provide backup options should the first choice fail to materialise. Sharing Career Alternatives with the family is vital to help adults collaborate with the younger career aspirant.

Career Preparation. Once Career Alternatives are identified, the career aspirant must begin career preparation. These are exercises to help the career aspirant realise his/her career alternatives. This includes skills for course selection, course completion, understanding the labour market, self-presentation skills, and job search skills. Developing a career development plan with the family makes career preparation more effective.

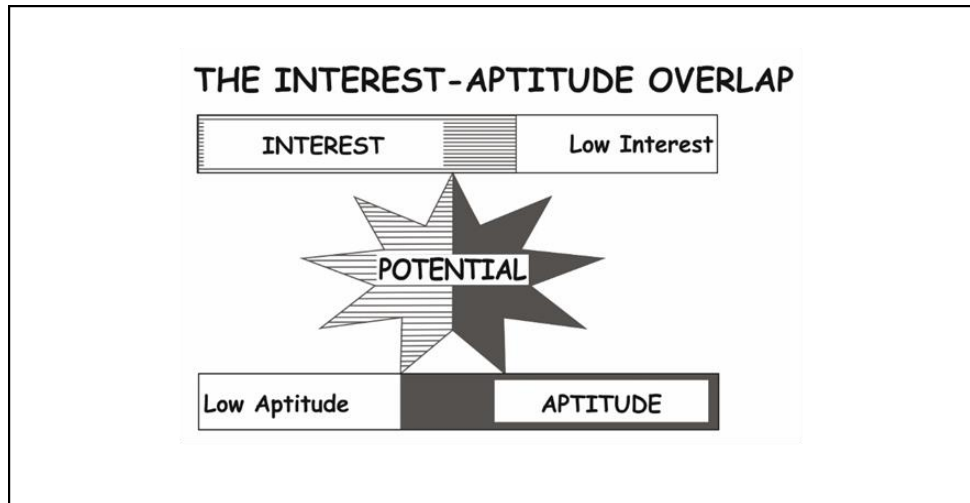
Multiple Potentials

Effective career counselling requires the concurrent analysis of two sets of data: information about the person (interests, aptitudes, potentials) and information about the world of work (a career dictionary). Data from a battery of tests, where each test is driven by a different theory, is difficult to reconcile. Similarly, to help the individual's exploration of the world of work, occupations need to be classified by the same categories that were used to analyse the individual's interests and aptitudes. Therefore, an effective career counselling system rests on a theoretically validated framework that allows the use of identical constructs, terminology, and methods for assessment and for classification of occupations. Such a system will promote both self-discovery, as well discovery of the world of work. Based on extensive research, and reviews of the scientific literature, the Jiva system of career guidance is based on and adaptation of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983) and is referred to as the Multiple Potentials Framework (Arulmani, & Nag-Arulmani, 2005). Accordingly, the Jiva rests on the understanding that all children are talented in some way or the other and hence all children must be celebrated.

Interest and Aptitude Overlap

Much controversy has arisen over whether a career guidance intervention should focus on the person's interests or aptitude (Arulmani, 2013; Arulmani, 2015). Jiva takes the position that both are equally important when helping the career chooser develop a deeper understanding of him/herself. Accordingly, promoting self-understanding within the Jiva model comprises 3 components: Understanding Interests, Understanding Aptitudes and Understanding the overlap between interests and aptitude. As shown in Figure 2 below, Jiva uses various methods to collect data both about interests and aptitudes and then looks for the blend or overlap between these two dimensions of a person's personality.

Figure 2. Interest-Aptitude Overlap and Identification of Potential



Merely knowing one's interests and aptitudes is not enough. It is possible that some of the interests identified might not match the individual's aptitude profile. It is also possible that the individual may not show an interest in careers linked to some of his/her aptitudes. The all-important task therefore is to help the career chooser discover the point of overlap between the person's interests and aptitudes. Within the Jiva model, this point of overlap has been named as the person's "potential". Jiva focuses on helping the individual discover this connection.

Social Cognitions and Career Beliefs

Social cognitions are patterns of thinking that have become habitual across social groups (Krumboltz, 1994; Bandura, 1986). Jiva refers to social cognitions related to career development as career beliefs. These are habits of thought which influence career development. They are attitudes, mindsets and opinions that underlie people's idea of a career. These patterns of beliefs maybe not just be limited to a single individual. They may be embedded in the community as a whole and transmitted to the young in that community through a process of social learning (Bandura, 1986). Career beliefs could colour the manner in which a career aspirant deals with career development tasks. Some examples of common career beliefs are: "Boys are better at mathematics and science than girls", or "Education is not important for career development." The impact of career beliefs on the career development process can be marked and critical. The effectiveness of career counselling can crumble if prevailing career beliefs are left unaddressed. Jiva workshops help career choosers understand how their career belief patterns are orienting them to their own career development.

Tests and Psychometry for Career Counselling

The Jiva system takes the mixed methods approach and uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative tools to derive the career aspirant's potential profile.

Quantitative Tools. The Comprehensive Student Information Protocol (CSIP) is a quantitative psychometric tool that combines an interest inventory and an aptitude test. The CSIP has been developed by Jiva specifically for Indian students and has been standardised on a sample of over 15000 Indian students.

Qualitative Tools. Jiva counsellors use a guided interview format with the student and parent to collect qualitative information. This covers the student's academic history, preferences, hobbies and accomplishments.

Both methods are embedded within the Multiple Potentials Framework described in the sections above. Jiva then uses a specific algorithm to combine both units of data and arrive at the career chooser's potential profile (Arulmani, 2014).

Person-centered profiling. By itself, a student's raw score has little meaning. A good test will provide norms to interpret a student's performance. Norms make it possible to determine where an individual stands in comparison to his/her peers. However, the normative approach has several limitations. Norms have been developed for very few tests for Indian populations. Also, the individual's ranking will change if the normative group to which he/she is compared, changes. For example, a student who was ranked at the highest position in her class, may sink to the bottom of the ranking if her scores are compared with a group that is composed entirely of high performers. Jiva takes a non-normative, person centered approach. The purpose of assessment within the Jiva method is not to identify how high a person's score is. Instead, the objective is to identify the pattern of scores across the multiple potentials framework described above. It is the shape of curve across the potentials being assessed rather than the height of the curve matters. Interpretation of scores is not based upon norms. Taking an intra-personal approach, Jiva uses the person as his/her own norm. Accordingly, the individual is not compared with a normative group. Instead, the individual identifies what his/her high and low potential are, in comparison to him/herself.

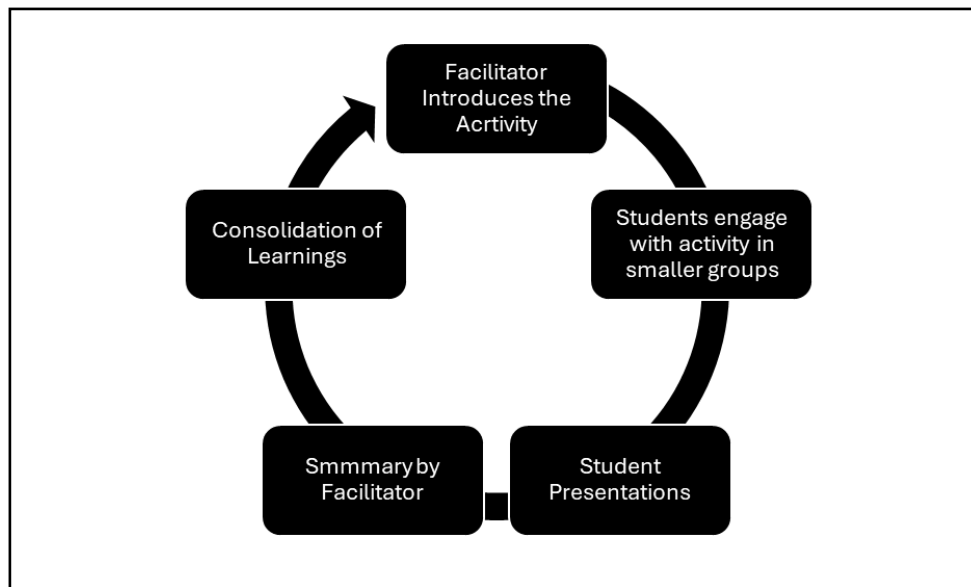
Approach to Intervention

Activity Based and Student Led

Jiva workshops are activity based. Each Jiva activity is designed to instil attitudes and skills for self-mediation. Throughout the workshop students encounter the importance of taking responsibility for their decisions and actions. The counsellor creates an environment for career discovery, but the activities are student-led. Therefore, the role of the careers facilitator is only to guide and create an environment for career discovery. As shown in Figure 3, Jiva workshops usually flow in the following phases:

- A workshop begins with an orientation from the facilitator to the whole group.
- The group then is divided into smaller groups. Each group works on a specific theme.
- The group then presents their discussions to the whole group, with the facilitator's support. The rest of the group learns from the discussions of each small group.

Figure 3. The Jiva Intervention Process



Students engage with the topics in the Career Discovery Path through a wide variety of interesting activities including games, peer discussions, tests, inventories, group work and time for quiet introspection. They record their learnings from each activity in their personal Jiva workbook.

Outcomes and Evidence of Impact

In order to ensure that Jiva interventions have the intended outcomes and impact, an ongoing monitoring and evaluation has been instituted. Given below is an overview of the outcomes of Jiva interventions and evidence of impact.

Improvements in Career Preparation Status

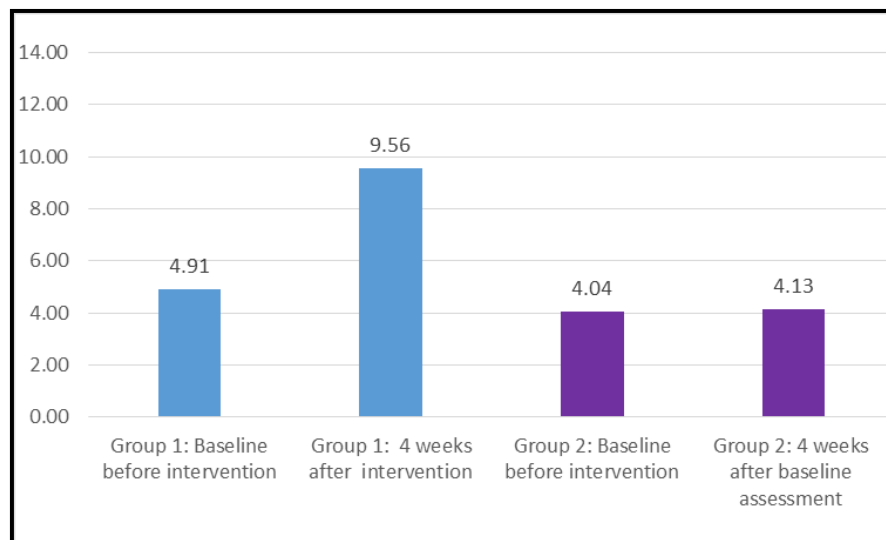
Assessment of impact is built into the design of Jiva interventions. Accordingly, students are assessed before the intervention and after the intervention for their career preparation status and readiness to make to make career decisions. Career preparation status (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2005), refers to the individual's readiness to make important career decisions. Measured by the Career Preparation Status Questionnaire (CPSQ), a standardised questionnaire (Arulmani, G., & Nag-Arulmani. (2005), readiness is seen in the quality maturity of the 4 interlocking career development factors as expressed by the Career Discovery Path: self-understanding, knowledge of the world of work, skills to develop career alternatives and skills for career preparation. The hypothesis here is that participants' preparedness scores would improve to higher than pre-intervention levels, after the intervention. Outcomes are also compared with a matched waiting-list control group who are yet to receive the Jiva intervention.

Figures 4 and 5 below present the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores of the students for the Jiva 2017-18 and 2018-19 cycles from Government High Schools in and around Bangalore.

Study 1: 2017-18 Roll Out

Presented in Figure 4 below is the pre and post intervention data of students' performance on the CPSQ at the end of the 2017-18 intervention. These were students in Grade 10, with a mean age of 15.6 years, from 20 different schools in and around Bangalore. The total number of girls was 450.

Figure 4. Mean scores obtained by students on the Career Preparation Status Questionnaire (CPSQ) before and after the intervention. Maximum possible score = 14.



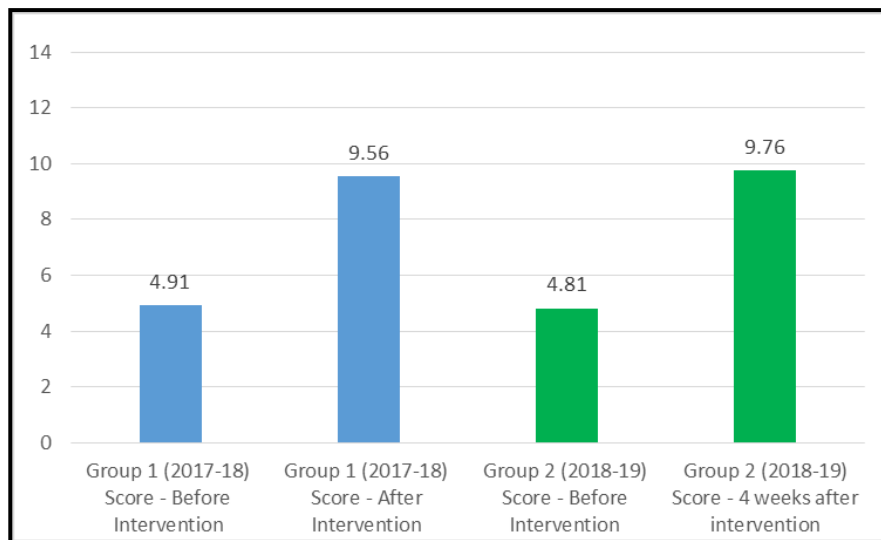
Group 1 (total number: 546) = Students who have received the complete intervention (Intervention Group); Group 2 (total number: 337) = Students who have not yet received the intervention (Waiting Control Group).

As per the data shown in Figure 4, the average CPSQ scores obtained both by the Intervention and Waiting Control groups (4.91 and 4.04 respectively) at Time 1 (before the intervention) is well below the maximum obtainable score of 14. This score improves substantially (9.56) at Time 2 (after the intervention) for the Intervention Group, while these scores remain almost unchanged from pre-intervention levels for the Waiting Control Group. This points to the possibility that the Jiva intervention could substantially improve the career preparation status of students who receive the intervention when compared with students who do not receive such an intervention.

Study 2: Comparison of Outcomes Across Two Batches of Students

Figure 5 below presents the pre, post intervention data on the CPSQ across two batches of students from the same schools as Study 1. Group 1 in the figure represents the 2017-18 batch. Group 2 represents the 2018-19 batch and comprised a total of 890 Grade 10 students with a mean age of 15.8 years where the total number of girls was 466.

Figure 5. A comparison of pre and post intervention mean scores obtained by students in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 interventions on the Career Preparation Status Questionnaire (CPSQ), Maximum possible score = 14.



Group 1 (N = 546) = Students who received the intervention in 2017-18. Group 2 (N = 890) students who received the intervention in 2018-19.

The following observations can be made from the data presented in Figure 5.

- Irrespective of academic year, students are at almost the same level of readiness to make career choices before the intervention is offered.
- Irrespective of academic year, the Jiva intervention substantially improves their readiness to make career choices.

This information shows that the Jiva intervention could bring students to a higher level of preparedness to make effective career choices. This implies that their knowledge of their interests and aptitudes, their awareness of the world of work and educational pathways has improved and they are able to choose career alternatives and prepare for their career development with greater awareness.

Study 3: Tracer Studies

The outcomes of the Jiva programme reported above are based on questionnaire data and students' narratives. It is seen that significant improvements have been made through the Jiva workshop. However, the key question that remains is whether the positive effect of the intervention sustains over time and whether students actually follow the careers advice they receive during the workshop. Therefore, we also attempted to get in touch with students who had gone through the 2017-18 roll out one year ago. We were able to reach 108 students, from 12 different schools, who had gone through the Jiva programme in 2017-18. Our interviews with them revealed the following:

- 82% of the students had followed the careers advice they received through the Jiva programme. They were following the career alternatives suggested to them in the Jiva career report and had selected the appropriate educational paths.
- Students who had not followed the advice given cited the following reasons:
 - Obtained poor marks or failed in their high school exam and therefore did not qualify for the course of their choice, as recommended in the Jiva career report.
 - Parents wanted them to take up a different educational path and this was usually the science based subject streams.
 - They did not agree with the advice given to them.

Evidence from Independently Conducted Quasi-Experimental Intervention Studies

Jiva has also been investigated independently through other studies. This section provides one such example.

Sangma (2014) in a doctoral study entitled “A School Based Intervention Study of Urban and Rural Indigenous High School Students in the East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya”, tested the Jiva programme through a quasi-experimental waiting-list control study with a sample of 492 male and female high school students (233 female students), in the rural and urban areas of Meghalaya. Post intervention assessment indicated that career preparation status, career belief patterns, and academic achievement motivation levels improved to statistically more significant levels amongst the Intervention Group (individuals who received the Jiva programme) than the Control Group (individuals who did not receive the intervention).

Conclusion

Arguable, Jiva is perhaps the only completely Indian and non-Western approach to career guidance and counselling, that is based on a substantially large evidence base and grounded in the cultural and economic realities of the country. It is presently implemented in different parts of India. The model has also been presented at a number of international conferences and has been adapted for use in 28 other countries.

The relevance of career counselling to the Indian context becomes sharper against the background of economic reforms that have led to India becoming one of the fastest developing economies. In the absence of suitable guidance “development” can be a double edged sword – benefiting a few but exploiting a large number only for the “cheap labour” they offer. At the same time, in order to be effective, interventions for career and livelihood planning must be based on culturally grounded mechanisms that resonate with individuals’ enculturated ways of living (Arulmani et al., 2020). Such an approach could help individuals find prosperity by maximising personal potentials and simultaneously contributing to society. The Jiva approach offers such a model.

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