



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as Semiotic Resources in Career Guidance: Exploring a 10th Grade Boy's Sociopolitical Motivations in Delhi, India

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Abstract

In this paper, we frame career choice in terms of “choosing problems” using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework as a semiotic resource to explore youth’s sociopolitical motivations. This has implications for career guidance practitioners who want to promote values of sustainability and social justice in their work. Using social semiotics theory, we explore how a 10th grade boy who studied at a government school in Delhi articulated his sociopolitical motivations to address a local problem in terms of one or more of the seventeen SDGs using the resources he had and/or aspired to access through future learning and work. The paper reimagines career counselling in facilitating youth to construct new narratives as they make connections between local “problems” they are motivated to address with their career aspirations on the one hand, and the global challenges that are being addressed by SDGs on the other.

Keywords: sustainable development goals (SDGs), career guidance, socio-political motivations, social semiotics, Education for Sustainable development (ESD)

Introduction

Career education scholars have long explored the tension between the economic and sociopolitical functions of career guidance and counselling (Bates, 1990; Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2017; Irving & Malik, 2004; Watts, 1996). Sociopolitical approaches to career guidance have varied between serving industrial needs, facilitating individual adjustments to realistic

opportunities, and enabling youth to transform themselves and/or the world of work (Bates, 1990; Watts, 1996). Career educators interested in social justice have to constantly negotiate the paradox of enabling youth to plan careers for themselves, compete in the job and labour markets for secure, well-paying jobs while facilitating a critical consciousness regarding the implications of their life choices on the production/disruption of social inequalities (Hooley, et al., 2017; Irving & Malik, 2004). In a neoliberal context, unwittingly, a

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student's personal career motivations and choices may not always be "sustainable" for themselves as individuals or for the local communities they are a part of (Arulmani, 2011; Sampson, Dozier, & Colvin, 2011). For instance, a young person's career aspirations in a neoliberal regime may be related to acquiring a comfortable material life (e.g., owning a house or a car), and may also signify high status, and in turn, success (e.g., a house in a "respectable" neighbourhood or the brand of the car). The motivated pursuit of these material signifiers of success, which are constantly evaluated, negotiated, and shifting in comparison with peers, may involve high stress that leads to burnout, and feelings of worthlessness as well as harm to the environment and local communities (Guichard, 2016). When tensions surface because of this inherent paradox, values of sustainable development may invariably be sacrificed in a neoliberal regime (Guichard, 2003). This raises questions around how career guidance and counselling practitioners with a social justice agenda might facilitate youth's reflection of such tensions that they may encounter in their lifetime while avoiding the pitfalls of imposing particular ideologically-motivated choices as universally ethical with a disregard to their material and cultural contexts (Ribeiro & Foncatti, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The paper locates itself in the intersections of critiques of decontextualisation of career guidance and counselling on the one hand (Hooley, et al. 2017; Alexander, 2017; 2015), and of Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) on the other (Stevenson, 2006; Tulloch, 2016). Decontextualisation in educational practices, it is argued, serves to maintain the status quo because it enables the construction of a coherent and discrete self that is detached from the complex entanglements that make up a locality, and can therefore act in a rational way (Decuyper, Hoet, & Vandenabeele, 2019;

Hager, 2006). Alexander (2017; 2015) has shown how the material and sociocultural environments of particular geographies produce particular work opportunities as well as how unequal sociospatial relations configure the materiality of different spaces differently. Further, individuals' entanglements with these spaces influence their career choices. Similarly, Stevenson (2006) has argued to move beyond the decontextualized debates on EE, which tends to be more eco-centric (focusing on natural or material environment), and ESD which while related to EE, and arguably emerging from EE, tends to be more anthropocentric (focusing on the interaction between social, economic, and environmental aspects of issues). This critique has prompted recontextualising pedagogies that are place-based (Bonnett, 2013). Hence, in this paper, we argue for framing career choice in terms of "choosing problems" to work towards a pedagogical and/or counselling strategy with the purpose of situating young people's motivations within their cultural and indeed, material contexts.

The purpose of exploring youth's socio-political motivations is not so much about concretely identifying a career and life path that accommodates their social and political goals (an instrumental approach) and/or to develop problem-solving and other life skills relevant to career management and sustainable development (an emancipatory approach) (Decuyper, et al., 2019). Instead, the purpose is for counsellors, educators, and youth to co-construct situated and relational understandings of the "more-than-human" spaces that they navigate (Decuyper, et al. 2019). Such a "navigational approach" does not seek to resolve aforementioned tensions but instead aims to enable youth to locate these tensions in the entanglements that shape the spaces that they navigate rather than in themselves. For this purpose, a useful framework is the SDGs that includes seventeen interconnected goals that "address the global challenges we face, including those related

to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice” (United Nations, n.d.). However, we propose the deployment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as one among several semiotic resources that youth can employ in exploring and articulating the tensions involved in choosing particular careers of interest in relation to their socio-political motivations to address local and/or global problems of interest rather than as a hegemonic discourse, particularly given its complicity with dominant neoliberal discourses (Tulloch, 2016).

Finally, we draw from social semiotics theories to explore the situated meanings of particular careers and occupations within their cultural and material contexts. In social semiotics, youth’s meaning-making or sign-making practices, that is, the practices of assigning specific meanings (signified) to specific careers (signifier) from a web of meanings available in their environments of communication are not arbitrary but *motivated* (Kress, 2010). In semiotic theory, a sign is a “...fusion of form and meaning, of *signified* and *signifier* (Mavers & Kress, 2011, p. 167, *emphasis in original*) where the signifier is any “observable form” such as a gesture, a word, a colour, an image, and the signified is a meaning attached to a signifier (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3). In social semiotics, signs are seen as unstable in that the meanings attached to particular signifiers are different and changeable in different space-time contexts (Mavers & Kress, 2011). For instance, careers and occupations have particular meanings attached to them in particular sociocultural contexts and may vary across contexts. Thus, exploring youth’s sign-making practices, that is, how they negotiate various meanings they encounter regarding a particular career provides insight into their socio-political motivations.

In this paper, we explored how one particular student, Ramesh (pseudonym), identified particular observable behaviours (signifiers) within his environment as

problems he is motivated to address, made new connections between these signifiers at the local level to the challenges that are being addressed by SDGs at the global level, and finally interpreted these connections in the context of his career aspirations. Our findings illustrate how Ramesh utilized the SDG framework as a semiotic resource in his sign-making to construct new meanings around becoming a policeman and/or a lawyer.

Background

This paper uses data from a research project that sought to embed ESD competencies as developed by Schreiber and Seige (2016) in careers education (see Table 1). An elaboration of this ESD competency framework is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the interview protocol developed using this framework is provided in Appendix 1.

Methodology

We conducted a single-sited qualitative research study at a government school in Delhi, India with 10 boys studying in grade 10 who are first-generation learners living in violent and economically poor neighbourhoods. This paper draws from one among the ten boys, Ramesh (pseudonym).

We worked with first generation learners from lower socioeconomic status groups because career guidance has been identified as a crucial resource that these learners need and do not have access to (Arulmani, Van Laar, & Easton, 2001). At the same time, we acknowledge that they have already been culturally prepared in particular ways to engage with work and careers (Arulmani, 2011). Rather than assuming a deficit approach, that is, assuming that they “lack” knowledge about the world of work, we sought to explore the “funds of knowledge” they have about their lifeworlds including the world of work (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2006). Further, we worked with boys because they are perceived to be socialised

TABLE 1: List of ESD competencies (adapted from Schreiber & Siege, 2016, p. 95)

| ESD COMPETENCIES | | |
|--|--|---|
| Recognising | Assessing | Acting |
| Acquisition and processing of information (on topics related to globalisation and development) | Change of perspectives and empathy (realise, appreciate and reflect upon own and others' values and their significance for life) | Solidarity and shared responsibility (realise areas of personal responsibility for humans and environment, and accept challenge) |
| Recognising diversity (sociocultural and natural diversity in the One World) | Critical reflection and comment (on issues of globalisation and development by orienting at international consensus, at the principal of sustainable development, and at human rights) | Understanding and conflict resolution (contribute to overcoming sociocultural barriers and self-interest by communicating and cooperating, and contribute to conflict resolutions). |
| Analysis of global change (using the concept of sustainable development) | Evaluation of development projects (work out approaches to evaluate development projects taking into account diverse interests and general conditions, and come to self-reliant conclusions) | Ability to act in times of global change (in personal and professional fields by openness and readiness to innovate as well as by an appropriate reduction of complexity, and to bear open situations) |
| Differentiation between levels of action (from individual to global level, and their respective function in development processes) | | Participation and active involvement (students are able and willing, based on autonomous decision, to pursue objectives of sustainable development in private, school, and professional fields, and to participate in their implementation in society and politics) |

towards occupying and navigating public spaces, and acquiring paid work from a young age (Dyson, 2008). We wanted to know how they made sense of the gendered nature of the world of work: an important perspective for achieving gender justice (Mills & Keddie, 2007). For instance, gender structured how older generations in a village in Uttarakhand, a state in North India, constructed girls' and boys' futures

differently with girls constructed as homemakers and agriculturalists, and boys imagined as seeking paid off-farm employment outside the village (Dyson, 2008). Recent studies on children's geographies have shown that children and young people do not passively adopt parental cultures but are social and political actors in their own right, and exercise agency in negotiating and resisting labour, in

assigning meaning to their labour, and in constructing subjectivities related to their labour (Dyson, 2008; Willis, 1977).

The second author volunteered at the school for a period of three months in order to understand the school context from an emic perspective. In addition, we conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews which ranged from 45 minutes to an hour where the participants spoke in a mix of Hindi and English. Most interviews were conducted by both authors in order to ensure consistency in questions, probes, and meaning-making across participants. We translated the interviews entirely into English. In order to ensure accuracy of translations, and to develop familiarity with all interviews, the interviews translated by one author were coded by the other author using the qualitative data software, Dedoose, after which we compared and discussed similarities and differences in our coding and interpretive processes. We initially analysed the data for a report using the ESD competencies as a framework to code the data. For a semiotic analysis, we selected one narrative and analyzed quotes that were previously coded as illustrating specific themes such as problems of interest, academic motivations, career motivations, SDGs of interest, and making connections with SDGs. We paid specific attention to tensions or conflicts in the agent's sign-making practices in each of these quotes and compared across themes for consistencies and coherence or lack thereof (Kress, 2010). After the analysis, we independently checked with the original audiorecording to check if and how the meanings related to sounds and words in Hindi, that might be lost in translation, altered our interpretations.

Below, we analyse the narrative of one student, Ramesh (pseudonym), using a social semiotics approach to explore how his meaning making around his career aspirations were sociopolitically motivated.

Analysis and Findings

Ramesh was categorized by his school teachers as an academically average student. He supported his father in his business of managing a Paying Guest (PG) hostel for young women and a canteen above their house. Before going to school at 12 noon, he would fill water, and sweep and swab the hostel floor above his house. After he returned from school at 6:30 p.m., he would go directly to the hostel canteen to prepare *roti* (bread) and attend to the customers. He claimed that his two older sisters did not contribute to housework or the work related to managing the PG hostel with his oldest sister working as an air hostess, and the second one studying B.A. and a computer course. He expressed that he felt a sense of discrimination with regard to this unequal distribution of work in his household. Yet, he also clarified that his father did not insist that he spend his time working but would encourage him to study, especially during exams. He said that he put in his time to support his father because he may feel bad if he did not, and also because he wanted to help him. He believed his communication and persuasion skills and mental Math have improved through his work at the hostel. However, one consequence of working at the hostel was that he did not get much time to study after school. He also felt that he had become "weaker" academically in recent years, and the excerpt below describes his (dis)engagement with different subjects over time:

I think I was very good in 6th and 7th. I got a lot of appreciation, I was good in academics and sports too. I was also very curious and creative, very good I was. But, as I'm growing up or in grades 8th, 9th, 10th, I'm slowly becoming weaker. I don't know why. But it's happening like that.... Nowadays, what's happening is that, I don't feel like it. Like in a few subjects, I don't like. Maths, Science, I don't like them anymore. In the middle, like Biology, I get some interest.

Otherwise, I'm not getting interest. The rest like English or SST (Social studies) or economics, I get interested in these on my own.... One thing I like in SST, I can link to the world, you become *aware* (*emphasis added*). That motivates me a lot to study. Somehow, in Maths and Science, I don't feel like I mean...

[Mujhe lagta hai ki 6th-7th mein main bahut accha tha, bahut tareef bhi kiya, *sports* mein bhi tha.. aur *curious creative* bahut accha tha, jaise jaise bada hote jaa raha hoon, 8th 9th 10th, dheere dheere kam hote jaa rahan hoon. Pata nahi kyon aisa ho raha hai (...) Magar aaj kal aisa hota hai na ki mann hi nahi karta hai.. kuch kuch *subject* mein accha nahi lagta hai... *Math, Science* aaj kal achha nahi lagta hai. *Biology* mein thoda sa *interest* aa raha hai.. baaki jaise *English* ho gaya, *SST* ho gaya, *Economics* ho gaya, usme *interest* aata hai apne aap se, sahi lagta hai (...) Ek toh ye cheez achhi lagti hai, jaise *SST* mein na hum sab *link* kar paate hai, *world* se, hum *aware* ho jaate hai.. yeh bahut *motivate* karta hai padhne ke liye... *Math Science*, mein kuch lagta nahi hai...] (English words have been italicized)

Ramesh's entanglements with his family were such that he chose to spend time working at the hostel over studying subjects that he had lost interest in, and in which he did not feel self-efficacious. This is a tension that we highlight later, again, when he describes his career aspirations.

Importantly, Ramesh located his motivation to study the subjects, English and Social Studies in the very particular ways that these subjects helped him become "aware" of his lifeworld. His usage of the English word "aware" is particularly significant as it has a specific situated meaning in the discourse of civics education. For instance, when we asked him to describe problems in his neighbourhood that he had experienced or

witnessed and was motivated to address, he drew our attention to the issue of violence in his neighbourhood from this particular way of understanding his lifeworld.

One bad thing happening always is the teasing of girls. Mostly, it is normal for girls. Or hitting someone in a gang. It's very easy. Some people come and they fight. All of this is normal. One day I felt even worse because we were going with our friends, and we saw there was a policeman - he had a big gun. We were just seeing his gun. And he just shooed us away swearing at us. So, we felt very bad. We had a lawyer teacher, a Teach for India (TFI) fellow. He said he has no right to do this. He can't do this. Then I felt the constitution says something different, and we're not *aware* (*emphasis added*) about this. And so for that reason, I felt we should have the knowledge of law.

[Ek toh jo bura chala aa raha hai, ladkiyon ko chedd diya.. yeh *normal* hai.. aur *gang* mein aake kisi ko maar diya, yeh bahut *easy* hai. Park mein jaate hai, kuch log aate hai, ladai vadaai karte hai, yeh sab *normal* hai.. ek din zyaada bura laga jab *policewale*, hum sab doston ke saath jaa rahe the, uska bada sa *gun* tha, aur paas hi mein uska *gun* dekh rahe the hum.. aur phir aise bola, "bhag!" aur gaali diya humko.. toh bahut bura sa laga humko.. phir ek *lawyerwale* bhैया aaye the, TFI [Teach for India] ka, toh unhone bola ki unke paas *right* nahi hai karne ka.. wo nahi kar sakte ye.. toh phir humko laga yeh sab *Constitution* kuch alag bol raha hai, aur hum kuch alag *follow* kar rahe hai.. yeh bahut bada.. *aware* nahi hain hum to iss wajah se laga ki *knowledge* hona chahiye.] (English words have been italicized)

In the above excerpt, Ramesh describes the issue of normalisation of violence in his neighbourhood whether in the

form of gender-based violence or gang violence. In particular, he assigns a specific meaning to the act of a policeman. This act can be interpreted as an expected behaviour in the policeman's line of duty, given the history of gang violence in the neighbourhood, where he presumably interpreted them to be a gang of young potentially violent men. Yet, Ramesh "felt bad". His teacher, a lawyer, also validated this feeling because he interpreted the policeman's behaviour as a violation of Ramesh's constitutional right to occupy a public space with his friends. This legal interpretation offered Ramesh a semiotic resource, a meaning system and a language, that he was previously unaware of, allowing him to interpret the policeman's behaviour in a new and meaningful way. Interestingly, he also used words like "rights" and "aware", which have situated meanings in civics education and in the legal lexicon, to articulate his frustration with the behaviour of the policemen.

For Ramesh, the policeman signified an authority that is violating the rights of citizens rather than upholding them while the lawyer signified an authority that is aware and is able to distinguish between just and unjust practices through the study of the constitution. Regardless of whether Ramesh's sign-making in the recounting of the incident was accurate, complete, or fair to the policeman in question, it reflects his motivation in identifying violence and injustice as a problem in his neighbourhood and in addressing this issue through the roles of policemen and lawyers. His motivations became clearer in his description of how he negotiated his career aspirations in relation to his family's beliefs regarding appropriate work and more broadly his cultural identity.

My air hostess sister said do physics and math, and become a pilot. I told her I'm not interested in physics. Then after that she didn't say anything. First she was forcing [me to] become [a pilot]. I said no, I don't want to become

that. I'm not interested. Second sister I told [that he wants to study law], she said okay. I've told mummy, papa but I don't think they will support. Actually, what do I say, my background, Christianity, Jehovah's witnesses, it's a little different. In that I have to give time towards worship in my religion, all this is there. So, because of that they won't be that supportive. I've spoken to my Bible studies teacher also, and they also suggested that that won't be of much benefit. And, so I'm a little confused as to what to do.... If you take into consideration the Bible, in that they say lead a simple life, be happy, and give more time to God. They were also saying similar things... Like they won't support politician, police they won't support because it involves fighting and all that. There should be no nationalism/patriotism....anyway, I get more interested in what is not allowed.... Like police.

[Jo *air hostess* waali behen hai, wo boli thi ki *Physics* or *Math* karke *pilot* ban ja.. maine bola ki mereko *interest* nahi hai *Physics* mein.. usne phir uske baad kuch bola nahi..pehle *force* kar rahi thi, ki ban ja ye.. lekin mere ko nahi banna hai, *interest* nahi hai.. chhoti wali didi ko bataya toh usne bola accha thik hai.. aur mummy papa bataya toh hai, par mujhe nahi lagta woh mujhe *support* karenge. Actually na, jis *background* se mein aaya hoon... jis *Christianity* se, *Jehovah's witnesses*.. toh usme kya hai ki, thoda alag sa hai.. unme *time* dena padta hai.. jo mera *religion* hai, usme *worship* ko thoda time dena padta hai.. yeh sab hai.. uski wajah se who itna *supportive* nahi hai.. jaise meine baat bhi kiya hai, meri *Bible studies* jo le rahe hai, unhone bhi suggest kiya hai ki itna khaas kuch faayda nahi dega. Toh mein abhi *confuse* hoon ki kya karoon (...) *Bible* ka who lo toh usme bolte hain na ki simple sa zindagi jiyo, khush raho or jyada *time* God ko do. Toh aise, wo bhi

aise kuch bolte hai (...) Jaise *politician* yeh sab ko *support* nahi karte hai.. jaise *police* usko bhi support nahi karenge.. jaise ladai wagera ki wajah se... thoda desh bhakti nahi hona chahiye..(...) aur yeh itna mereko nahi pata hai.. aur jo sab nahi karna chahiya, mereko *interest* ussi mein hai] (English words have been italicized)

This account reveals that Ramesh's career aspiration of being a policeman can be traced not only to the incident he described earlier but can also be situated as a desire for self-expression in relation to his family's and community's beliefs around appropriate work. His resistance can be located within an adolescent's desire for independence, and justified by a particular ethical belief system (the constitution, law, and human rights) while in dialogue with another ethical belief system (specific religious tradition). At the same time, this account also highlights his entanglements and his attachments that generate a tension or conflict demanding from him a choice and an action that is deeply socio-political. Below is an excerpt that describes his emotions regarding this choice-making process.

I feel like I've put my feet on two different boats. Sometimes I feel like going on this side when I talk to them [parents, Bible teacher], and when I talk to my friends or to school teachers, then I feel I should go this side. So, I'm totally confused.

[Aise lagta hai ki do naon mein meine pair rakh diya hai.. kabhi mujhe aise lagta hai ki mein yeh *side* jaun, jab kisi se baat karta hoon. Kabhi doston se, yaa *school* ke *teacher* se baat karna hoon so lagta hai iss side jaun. Mein pura *confuse* hoon.] (English words have been italicized)

Ramesh's confusion emerged from the tension between his conflicting socio-political motivations which he had not yet resolved, and which were situated within the social

arrangements he was a part of. This tension is likely to resurface repeatedly demanding him to make the choice again and again, or in Butlerian terms (1988), to perform his socio-political identity through a repetition of acts which have a specific set of meanings in his environments of communication. Not surprisingly, he expressed a desire to be completely removed from these entanglements:

I want to stay outside. I don't know why. I mean, family should be there but too much family family has happened. I feel I should go outside, where no one recognizes me, and lead a life where no one knows me.

[Bahar rehna chahta hun, pata nahi.. abhi *family family* bahut ho gaya.. mere ko aisa lagta hai, alag koi jaane na pehchaane.. aise anjaan si *life* jiyun.. aisa lagta hai] (English words have been italicized).

Ironically, the above excerpt highlights the deep attachments that Ramesh was embedded in because his choices "outside" of his environments of communication are meaningless in the sense of being universal, decontextualized and apolitical. It is only when we probed about the consequences of his oldest sister's negotiations with their parents to become an air hostess, and their reluctant acceptance of her choice that he said he would talk and negotiate about his career motivations with his parents again.

This conflict was less apparent when we asked if he could make connections between his career aspiration and/or issues he saw within his neighbourhood with global sustainable development goals:

Like this one- peace, justice and strong institutions. If we know what's right, what's wrong, how should it be. After that it will help us, to stop someone, or to give justice. If I can study law, I can stop people. I also feel that people are not aware of their rights.

[Jaise yeh haina, *peace, justice and strong institutions...* *justice* basically, agar hame pata hai kya sahi hai or kya galat hai..kaisa hona chaiye, aur kya hai.. uske baad madad karega, kisiko rokne ke liye, *justice* ke aage aane ke liye madad kar sakta hai agar mein law padhun toh. Isiliye patah hoga, toh mein rok bhi sakta hoon... jyaadatar logon ko *aware* nahi hai, ki kya hai unka *right*]

Ramesh located his sociopolitical motivations in a desire to promote peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>) which he aimed to realise through the study of law and human rights, and possibly plan to become a policeman subsequently. In the above excerpt, Ramesh associated the study of law with agency “to stop people” and “to give justice”, possibly from the authority and/or knowledge that the study of law may offer but also possibly because it involved an abstract, decontextualized rationalized choice around his socio-political motivations.

In this section, we have described how Ramesh utilized the SDG framework as a semiotic resource in his sign-making about career choice whereby he articulated his motivation to be a policeman and/or a lawyer. While this new sign was not entirely inconsistent with his religious faith in that it emerged from a desire for peace and justice while using a different meaning system, his semiotic choices are deeply socio-political within his environment of communication.

Discussion

Careers education and guidance scholars who have sought to understand the motivations shaping career choice have noted that career choice are mediated through “career identities” (London, 1983) which are often informed by particular sociopolitical motivations referred variously by scholars as “service orientation” (Duffy &

Raque-Bogdan, 2010), “feminist orientation” (O, Brien & Fassinger, 1997), and “critical consciousness” (Watson, 2010). This paper contributes to these socio-political approaches to understanding career choice related motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation. Ramesh’s meaning making practices were motivated in that he placed a particular value to a particular career (policeman) within a web of meanings available for that particular career in his sociocultural context: his lived experience in relation to the behaviour of a policeman, studying school subjects such as civics education and constitutional law, and a specific religious perspective regarding appropriate work.

From a practice point of view, framing career choice in terms of choosing problems to work on allows youth to explore the skillsets and resources they have, need and desire to understand and address such ‘problems’ at different levels of action. For example, Ramesh situated his knowledge of learning civics, and desire to learn law within a context of addressing issues of violence in his neighbourhood, and broadly to achieve SDG 16. Alternative pathways could include studying political science and human rights, working with a human rights NGO, or studying IPS. At the same time, we caution against the use of the SDGs or of choosing problems in an instrumentalist or individual emancipatory sense, and argue for a navigational approach wherein youth learn to orient themselves in relation to the tensions emerging from their social arrangements (Decuypere, et al., 2019).

An important issue to consider is how career educators might be imposing their own ideologies on to students. We do not suggest that students mandatorily design their stories using the SDGs. Rather, it could be one among several semiotic resources through which they can explore their motivations. While students are free to dismiss the sustainable development lens, also a political choice, it would be important for them to reflect on why such a lens is not

meaningful to them, and why they find other lenses more meaningful in articulating their motivations.

Being able to tell coherent and compelling career stories is a crucial career management skill in application processes for education and employment opportunities (Savickas, 2012). It is important to note that we do not suggest that youth necessarily make linear and coherent connections between their academic interests, issues in the neighbourhood, sustainable development goals, and career aspirations. Rather, we suggest that the SDG framework may facilitate students to make connections that they may not have made heretofore, and create possibilities to redesign their narratives in light of these connections, and consequently enable them to construct more coherent and compelling narratives.

We hope that situating career guidance within a social justice framework that has increasing global legitimacy will lend the field of career guidance and counselling more currency in educational policy making at local, national, and international levels. EE has acquired legitimacy within school curricula in India since the 1980s (Iyengar & Bajaj, 2011), and hence embedding the SDG framework with career guidance is a strategically useful entry point to push the agenda of both ESD and career guidance. However, the ESD discourse is often ideologically ambiguous, sometimes aligning with neoliberal agendas particularly when offered in a decontextualized manner (Tulloch, 2016). Hence, it is crucial to situate both ESD, and career guidance and counselling within the complexities of participants' socio-material contexts.

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Appendix Interview Guide

| |
|-----------------|
| 1. Name |
| 2. Class |
| 3. Age |
| 4. School Name |
| 5. Address |
| 6. Phone number |
| 7. Email |

Academics and Daily Activities

1. Describe your typical school day.
2. Do you enjoy academic work? What are your favourite subjects and activities in school?
3. What motivates you to do well in school?
4. Grades in Class 8th, 9th and 10th
5. Describe your typical holiday. What do you like to do in your free time?

Family and Career Choices

1. Can you tell us who are part of your family and what they do?
2. Have you thought about what you would like to do in the future?
3. If yes, what are your aspirations? Probe understanding of difference between job versus career). Probe: How do you think you'll grow in this field you have chosen?
4. What kind of a working environment and colleagues would you like? - location, status, Corporate? Entrepreneurial? (living here/elsewhere, alone/with family?)
5. What are the various factors that contribute in you making a career choice? What are the major influences in you making a choice?
6. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being completely independent choice, and 1 being a decision completely based on your family choice and circumstance), rate how independent your choice will be for your career path
7. In case there is a conflict within your family for making the career choice, how are you likely to resolve it or deal with?
8. Do you think you will be able to achieve your career goals?
9. What kind of skills and values you would need to imbibe for your career choices?
10. What are the challenges you are likely to face? What kind of support will you need and how will you get that support?

Social Map – 5-10 people who are likely to help them and where come from?

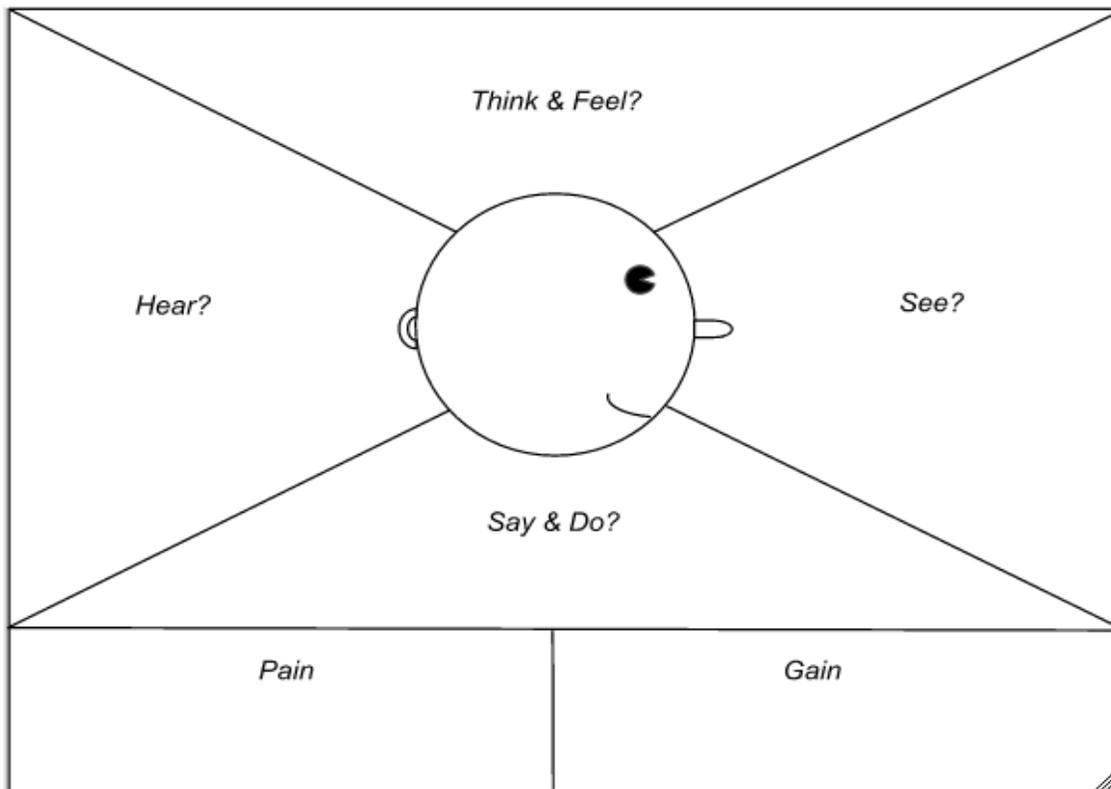
| Relationship | Gender | Education Level | Caste/Religion | Economic Backgroud |
|--------------|--------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Friend 1 | F | Class X | Muslim | Middle class |

Connecting Careers and ESD

- What are your main sources while gathering information about different career options?
- How do you think what you study on a day-to-day basis is likely to help you in your career choice?
- Among these options, whose opinion are you most likely to rely on and why?

- Do you think people from certain gender, caste, religion or economic background are more suited or favoured for certain jobs? (This can be asked specific to the career if their choice)
 - What kind of work do girls and women do?
 - What kind of work do boys and men do?
 - What about difference in the work that people of different castes/religious background do?
 - How kind of jobs do people from rich families end up doing?
 - Why do you think these differences exist or how did they come about?
 - Have there been any changes in these trends? If so, how do you think they came about?

Empathy Map



- How do you think your choice of career is likely to impact any one or more of these issues? Can you give concrete examples? (If not through career, how would you work on the issues indirectly?)
- Have you seen this SDG chart before? Where? What do you know about it? Which SDGs in this chart address are related to the problem you identified in your neighbourhood/life? If you were to become *mention career preferences*, how would you address this SDG and/or problem?
- What kind of a life do you imagine? (What do you mean by a “good” life)?