



THE EVIDENCE · IN PLAIN ENGLISH

The research behind the programme, without the research language.

What the evidence on career success actually says — the findings,
the numbers, the popular ideas that did not survive testing, and what
we are therefore allowed to promise you.

VERSION 1.0 · AUGUST 2026

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS



Rosemounts Institute · E-45 Race Course, Dehradun 248001 · www.rosemounts.org

The research behind the programme, without the research language.

What the evidence on career success actually says — the findings, the numbers, the popular ideas that did not survive testing, and what we are therefore allowed to promise you. Written for parents, teachers and counsellors, not for a journal.

What this is. A readable version of the research programme behind the VIP+™ Career Pathway Program. It adds nothing new and softens nothing. If you want the full technical review with every citation, that exists too — the 33-page paper is published here, free, with no form to fill in.

How it was built. Around 700 claims were pulled from primary research papers. Each one was then put through an adversarial check — independent reviewers were instructed to *try to disprove it* against the original published tables, not to confirm it. Where a number appears below, it was checked against the published study itself, never against somebody's summary of it.

ONE

Why we did this

Career guidance is full of confident frameworks that nobody has ever tested. We wanted to know which parts are real.

Most of what is sold as career science in India — and, to be fair, most of what is sold as career science anywhere — is a diagram somebody drew, given a name, and repeated until it sounded established. Some of it is true. A surprising amount of it has been tested and failed, and is still being sold.

So we started with one rule, and the rule had teeth.

No framework enters the model — or any promise we make to you — unless it earns its place through verified evidence.

That sentence is easy to write and uncomfortable to live with, because it means popular ideas die. Several did, and you can read the list further down. It also means our model was not designed and then defended. It is simply the shape left standing after everything unsupported had been stripped away. That is why we describe it as **discovered, not designed** — and why we can hand it to a sceptical principal or a psychologist without flinching.

The rule refused things during the work itself. Partway through, an external reviewer proposed adding an entire new layer to the theory — something called “career judgement”. It was attractive, it sounded right, and it would have been commercially convenient. We ran a dedicated research pass on it with a clear standard to meet. It did not meet the standard, so it was refused — and we wrote the refusal into the theory rather than quietly dropping it.

TWO

What “career success” actually means

Before you can explain success, you have to define it. The evidence says it has three planes — and the first two barely overlap.

The visible plane

Objective success. What other people can see and count — salary, job level, promotions, prestige.

The felt plane

Subjective success. Your own judgement of your career — satisfaction, meaning, growth, recognition, and the room it leaves for a life.

The floor

Sustainability. Whether it can be carried for forty years — health, happiness, and a fit that keeps working as both the person and the work change.

The finding that changes everything. Salary and career satisfaction share only 3–9% of their variance. They are two different things, not two views of one thing. A person can be objectively successful and subjectively empty — and the reverse is just as common.

This has a blunt practical consequence, and it is the reason we write the way we do.

Any sentence promising “success” without saying which kind cannot be checked, and therefore cannot be trusted. When you next read a career programme's brochure, notice how rarely it says which ledger it means.

It matters for your child too. A programme that optimises the visible plane while quietly draining the floor produces failures that arrive years later — long after the report was filed and everybody involved had moved on.

Success is culturally weighted, not culturally universal

A study across 30 countries and 18,471 people found the same seven dimensions of success everywhere — but every single dimension differed in how much it *mattered* from country to country. Financial security ranked highest in Slovenia, the USA, Nigeria and Belgium; lowest in Japan and Argentina.

So the structure of success is shared. The weighting is personal, and it is cultural. An Indian Grade 12 student, her parents, and a hiring manager in Bengaluru can agree completely on the list and still rank it in three different orders — which is precisely the argument most families are actually having.

Our instruments therefore have to ask *what matters to this person*. They are not permitted to apply a fixed hierarchy and call it science.

THREE

How success actually happens — five laws

These five are not a model somebody drew on a whiteboard. Each one is what survived after its claims were attacked.

Law 1

Two ledgers and a floor

Career success is kept in two ledgers that barely correlate, standing on a floor of sustainability. And the engines differ: education, experience and ability drive the visible ledger; sponsorship, support and disposition drive the felt one.

In plain terms: what gets you paid and what makes you content are largely different machines. Say which one you mean.

Law 2 · the one that justifies counselling at all

The Machinery Law

Stable traits never act directly on success. Every formally tested causal chain runs through *behaviours* — goal setting carries conscientiousness, knowledge acquisition carries ability, initiative carries proactivity, managing your own reactions carries emotional intelligence, building contacts carries networks. Traits keep a small direct path, but the behaviours carry most of the load.

In plain terms: traits are the levers; behaviours are the machinery. The levers are largely fixed. **The machinery is teachable.** That is the deepest evidence-based reason for doing this work at all — and it is why a report that only tells you what your child *is* has stopped halfway.

Law 3

The Alignment Law

Fit multiplies what a person's endowment merely offers. Interest congruence predicts performance at double the strength of raw interest scores (.32 against .16). Personality validities double — or reverse direction entirely — depending on whether the job switches the trait on. Person–career fit is the named mechanism of whether a career can be sustained.

In plain terms: the unit of career guidance is never the person alone, and never the job market alone. It is the match between them — which is where the measurable multipliers actually live.

Law 4

The Compounding Law

Behaviours convert into capitals that grow. Knowledge accumulates into human capital; contact-building into social capital. And these pay compound interest — networking predicts not just salary but salary *growth*; education remains the strongest classic objective predictor; sponsorship pays .44 on the felt ledger, twice its effect on salary.

In plain terms: early behavioural investment matters out of all proportion. The school years are the cheapest point on the compounding curve — which is the entire argument for a long ladder rather than one test in Grade 12.

Law 5

The Law of the Field

Careers are played on a field the player did not choose. Parental background rivals cognitive ability as an income predictor. Neighbourhood effects are causal, not merely correlational. And 65–69% of people report that chance events shaped their careers.

In plain terms: a theory that leaves out the field flatters the winners. But the field is interruptible — and where it can be interrupted is the single most important thing we found.

The interruption point

Family background does **not** transmit to educational attainment directly. The direct path is roughly **.05** — near zero. It flows almost entirely through *the influence of significant others, and the aspirations they shape*.

Read that again, because it is the most hopeful finding in the whole literature. What a child ends up achieving is not handed down by their family's circumstances. It travels through what the adults around them expect, notice and say — and through what the child therefore comes to believe is available to them.

Aspirations are the one layer of the whole structural machine that a school, a teacher or a counsellor can actually reach. That is not a slogan. It is the mechanism, and it is where this work belongs.

The order things happen in

The laws run in developmental time, and there is exactly one strict prerequisite.

- **Aspirations form first, and gate everything.** Grades 6–9 are the window.
- **Alignment belongs to adolescence** — interests and dispositions stabilise enough to measure, and stream choices begin locking environments in.
- **Machinery training runs from adolescence onward** — goal setting, initiative, networking, managing your own reactions.

- **Compounding dominates early career; sustainability dominates the whole lifespan.**

The one strict rule. Nothing downstream compensates for an aspiration that closed early. A student who never aspires never enters the pipeline the rest of the theory describes. Almost everything else can be repaired later. This cannot — which is why the most important conversation is usually years before the one families think is urgent.

Three loops that make it a system, not a ladder

Competence precedes confidence

Self-belief is mostly a *product* of past performance, not its driver. The loop runs mastery → confidence → higher goals. Engineer early wins; don't exhort belief.

Success buys access

Attainment attracts sponsors, networks and opportunities. This is how early gaps widen into late ones.

Mastery raises aspirations

Which closes the loop back to the interruption point — and explains why one well-designed success experience in Grade 8 can still be echoing a decade later.

FOUR

The six capitals

Everything verified sorts into six things a person carries, plus one field that carries the person. They were grouped by evidence — same mechanism, same changeability — not by what made a tidy diagram.

Capital	What it is	Can it be changed?
Endowment <i>who you are</i>	Ability, personality, interests, values, core self-evaluations. Sets your starting leverage.	Largely no — measure it and align to it, don't try to rebuild it
Behavioural <i>what you do</i>	Goal setting, initiative, networking, career planning, knowledge acquisition, managing your reactions, perseverance.	Yes — wholly teachable. The most consequential cluster there is
Human <i>what you've built</i>	Education, skills, job knowledge, work experience.	Yes — accrues at school and beyond
Social <i>who carries you</i>	Networks, sponsorship, mentoring, supervisor support.	Yes — and the most under-taught capital relative to its evidence
Adaptive <i>how you steer</i>	Career adaptability, learning orientation, proactivity.	Yes — there is intervention evidence
Vitality <i>what sustains you</i>	Sleep, hope, self-efficacy, resilience, optimism, low strain.	Yes — and trainable in hours, not years
The Context <i>the field, not a capital</i>	Structural origins · which jobs switch which traits on · chance.	Two of its three parts have known intervention points

Why this matters to a parent. Almost every career test on the market measures Endowment and stops. Endowment is the one column in that table that mostly cannot be changed. A report that tells you only who your child is, and nothing about what they can build, has measured the fixed part and left out the part you can do something about.

FIVE

What didn't survive

This is the section that proves the rule works. These are popular ideas we could easily have built on — and in several cases would have made money from. The evidence deflated them, so we didn't.

Grit, as a distinct trait

Grit correlates with plain old conscientiousness at **.84**. At that overlap it is largely the same thing with a better book. Its link to academic performance is only **.18**. What does survive is one narrower part of it — perseverance of effort — which adds a little beyond conscientiousness. That part is real, and it is what our items aim at.

Emotional intelligence, the ability kind

Ability-based emotional intelligence predicts job satisfaction at **.07** — effectively nothing. What does work is the behaviour underneath it: being able to manage your own reactions. That is a skill sitting in the machinery layer, where it can be taught.

The 10,000-hours rule

In professions, deliberate practice explains **under 1%** of the variance in performance. Hours worked predicts salary at **.24** but performance at **.02**. Practice matters enormously in chess and violin. The professions are not chess. This is probably the single most repeated idea in career advice, and it does not travel.

Growth mindset, as a universal

The link between mindset and achievement is around **.10**, and interventions are largely ineffective at scale. Possibly real for specific at-risk groups. Not a foundation to build a programme on, and it is built on constantly.

Protean and boundaryless careers

Deflated as distinct constructs. The satisfaction link is real (**.41**), but the ideas do not carve the world at a genuinely new joint.

The “five critical ingredients”

The most-cited fact in the whole of career intervention science — a neat ladder of effect sizes rising as you add ingredients. It was built on a database in which *no study ever combined more than three of them*. The five-ingredient claim was therefore never actually tested, and a 2017 replication explicitly failed to find it.

Why this is the most valuable section in the document. Anyone can assemble a framework from popular ideas. Very few will show you the list of attractive ideas they *refused*. If you are choosing between career programmes and want one question to ask, this is it: *what have you tested and decided not to use?*

Six claims we will not make — and you should question elsewhere

These circulate widely in the career guidance industry, including in material that looks authoritative. Each one is either unreplicated, misreported, or contradicted at source.

- The “five critical ingredients” and the rising dose ladder that goes with them — failed replication.
- Intervention effect sizes around 0.80 drawn from a 2018 paper — descriptive only, nine studies, inflated by an outlier.
- An effect size of 1.38 from a 2019 paper — the published confidence interval is broken.
- Causal wage premia from meeting employers — the underlying data are correlational and are widely misquoted as causal.
- “Interest inventories don’t work” — false. Congruence predicts performance at .32.
- The idea that cognitive ability matters progressively more in more complex jobs, presented as settled — it is genuinely contested.

SIX

What can actually be taught — and what we may therefore promise

The verdict in one sentence: career interventions work — modestly, honestly, and mostly on what students *believe and decide*, not on what they later earn.

0.352

Career choice interventions, overall

57 studies, 7,364 students, measured against no-treatment controls. This is the honest headline figure.

0.825

Counsellor support

The single strongest ingredient of any that has been tested. **The human being in the room beats every content component.**

0.522

Values clarification

Second strongest. Working out what actually matters to you does more than being told about jobs.

0.506

Decision psychoeducation

Third. Teaching a student *how deciding works* outperforms telling them what to decide.

0.253

Information about jobs, alone

Weak. And role modelling alone was not significant at all. Build workshops, not lectures.

~5

Sessions, the apparent optimum

Effects peak near five and fall at six or seven. Each cell holds only five studies, so we say *appears*, never *proven*.

One more finding we build on: the psychological resources that sustain people — hope, self-efficacy, resilience, optimism — are **trainable in hours**. Overall effect of 0.34 across 41 controlled trials, with resilience the most responsive at 0.49. A genuine randomised trial with 364 people produced gains from a single two-hour online module.

The honest ceiling — the sentence that governs everything we sell

Every outcome in that evidence is **proximal and self-reported**. There is no verified evidence anywhere in the world literature that career interventions change employment rates, wages, or grades.

So no wage claim and no employment claim appears in any Rosemounts material, ever, until our own long-term data earns it. If you have been shown a career programme that promises salary outcomes, it is not drawing on evidence that exists.

The three labels

Every claim we publish carries one of three labels, and the label governs how we are allowed to word it. You will see these in our reports and on our pages.

Label	What it means	What we may say
VERIFIED	Meta-analytic or trial evidence, checked against the primary source.	Quote the number.
PROMISING	The mechanism is verified, but the intervention evidence is small, indirect, or not yet checked by us.	Say the word “promising”. Build with humility. Measure everything.
FRONTIER	Nobody has evidence yet.	Admit it — and let our own data become the study.

Eight areas currently sit on the Promising shelf awaiting re-verification, including goal-setting programmes, mentoring, aspiration work and networking training. They are not refuted — several are probably real. They simply have not earned a number yet, and we would rather tell you that than round it up.

One verified finding about networking is a caution, and it changed how we build. A controlled study improved students' planning and optimism about networking — and failed to change their actual networking behaviour at all. Which is why our networking work is designed as real attempts with real people, and not as a lesson about networking.

SEVEN

The numbers worth carrying in your head

If you remember nothing else from this document, remember these. All verified at primary source.

What	Number	Why it matters
Salary ↔ career satisfaction	.18–.30	The two ledgers are separate. Never accept “success” unqualified.
Education → salary	.29	Strongest classic predictor on the visible ledger.
Feeling in control of your own life → career satisfaction	.47	The largest single number we hold — and it sits on the felt ledger, not the visible one.
Supervisor support → career satisfaction	.46	The environment matters as much as the person.
Sponsorship → career satisfaction	.44	Double its salary effect. Social capital is badly under-taught.
Interest congruence → performance	.32 (vs .16 raw)	Fit doubles the value of an interest score. The Alignment Law in one figure.
Fit → job satisfaction	.19	Real, but modest. We quote it honestly rather than inflating it.

What	Number	Why it matters
Grit ↔ conscientiousness	.84	Grit is mostly conscientiousness wearing a newer name.
Family background → attainment, <i>direct</i> path	≈ .05	Near zero. It flows through aspirations. This is the interruption point.
Deliberate practice in professions	<1% of variance	The 10,000-hours rule does not travel to careers.
People reporting chance shaped their career	65–69%	Luck belongs in the model, not in a footnote — and open, exploring people convert more of it.
Agreeableness in highly competitive jobs	–.40	A personality trait can reverse direction by occupation. One universal weighting is indefensible.

One honest note on ranges. The predictive power of cognitive ability is genuinely contested in the field — estimates run between .22 and .51 depending on the statistical correction used. We quote it as a range, not a point. What is not contested is the shape of the chain: ability works by helping you learn faster, not by acting on outcomes directly.

Career success is produced when a stable endowment is aligned with environments that activate it, expressed through teachable behaviours that compound into capitals, sustained by vitality, on a field whose structural pathway is interruptible at aspirations.

That is the whole theory in one sentence. Everything above is the evidence for it.

EIGHT

What we still don't know

A theory that cannot be proven wrong is not a theory. Seven questions expose ours to refutation — and two of them are studies nobody in the world has run.

Does fit make discipline pay off more?

Do students in well-fitted streams convert conscientiousness into achievement at a higher rate than students who aren't? We measure both sides of this in every single student. The field has never tested it.

Is “decision quality” even a real thing?

Does it add anything once personality, self-belief and ability are accounted for? The definitive test has never been run anywhere. If it goes the other way, our theory gains a layer — and we will publish that too.

Does school guidance close background gaps in India?

The mechanism — aspirations carrying the effect of family circumstance — was established in the United States decades ago. It has never been properly replicated here.

Does training the machinery actually work?

Does teaching goal setting, initiative and networking raise outcomes beyond what trait levels alone predict — most of all for students in the middle, who get the least attention?

Does fit-based guidance protect well-being?

Not just attainment — sustainability. This is the question that separates our approach from rank-and-push counselling, and we cannot yet answer it.

Age and culture

Do predictors gain validity from Grade 6 to Grade 12 as a student's world opens up? And do Indian students and parents weight the dimensions of success differently from Western norms?

And a gap we found in our own work. Our assessment battery covers Endowment almost completely, touches the behavioural and adaptive layers in fragments, and does not yet measure social capital or vitality at all — two of the six capitals, both with real evidence behind them. We wrote that down ourselves rather than waiting for somebody else to find it, and it is the clearest development priority we have.

Every one of those questions needs the same thing: data from real students assessed repeatedly across school years, not once at seventeen. That is what a long assessment ladder produces. The largest gap in the world literature — no verified link from career guidance to real-world outcomes — is a gap that only long-term school data can close, and there are not many organisations positioned to try.

NINE

Where this leaves you

If you are a parent

Three things in this document are worth acting on. **Ask which kind of success** any programme is promising your child — the visible one or the felt one — because they are not the same and the answer tells you a great deal. **Start earlier than feels urgent**, because aspirations form in Grades 6 to 9 and nothing later fully compensates for one that closed. And **be suspicious of certainty**, including ours: the honest ceiling on all of this is real, and anybody promising you a salary outcome is not working from evidence that exists.

If you lead a school

The single most important finding here is that family circumstance reaches a child's achievement almost entirely through aspirations — through what the adults around them expect and notice. That is a mechanism your school already operates, whether deliberately or not. It is also the one point in the whole structural machine that a school can reach. Everything else in a career programme is downstream of it.

If you are a counsellor

0.825. You are the strongest verified ingredient in the entire intervention literature — stronger than any content, any test, any platform. Everything we build is designed to extend what you do between sessions, and none of it is designed to replace you. The evidence would not support it if it were.

The full paper

This document is the readable version. The complete evidence review — every effect size, every mechanism, every citation, and the seven open questions in full — runs to 33 pages and is published free.

Download *The Science Behind the VIP+™ Career Pathway Program* (PDF) — no form, no email address required.

Most career assessments give you a report. Ours starts a conversation.

If something here raised a question about your own child, your own students, or your own practice — that is the conversation. Come and have it with us.

Know Yourself. Navigate Anything. Come Back Anytime.©

The Research Behind the Programme, in Plain English · Version 1.0 · August 2026

A readable companion to *The Science Behind the VIP+™ Career Pathway Program*. Adds no new claims.

Rosemounts Institute · E-45 Race Course, Dehradun 248001, Uttarakhand, India

www.rosemounts.org · info@rosemounts.org · +91 7302222330



© 2026 Madhukar Dhiman / Rosemounts Institute. All Rights Reserved.