

Youth and the Labour Market Landscape in India: Issues and Perspectives

NLI Research Studies Series
No. 140/2019

S.K. Sasikumar



V.V. Giri National Labour Institute

Youth and the Labour Market Landscape in India: Issues and Perspectives

(Research study carried out under the aegis of the
BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes)

NLI Research Studies Series No. 140/2019

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ISBN: 978-93-82902-69-0

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No. of Copies : 300

Year of Publication : 2019

This document can be downloaded from the Institute's website at www.vvgnli.gov.in

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Printed and Published by V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, Sector-24,
Noida-201301, U.P.

Printed at: Chandu Press, D-97, Shakarpur, Delhi-110092

Preface

V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNI) represents India in the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes which was established in 2017. Other member Institutions of this Network are: National Labour Market Observatory of the Ministry of Labour of Brazil, Brazil; All-Russia Research Institute for Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation; Chinese Academy of Labour and Social Security, China; and University of Fort Hare, Republic of South Africa.

One of the major objectives of this network is to undertake research studies on contemporary concerns related to labour and provide policy inputs to achieve strong, sustainable and inclusive growth. Accordingly, the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes had undertaken a research study relating to Youth Employment during 2019. This research study assumes significance in the context of the ongoing demographic transition, rapid and accelerated technological transformations and the desired development trajectories spelt out in the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

This research study in the context of India was undertaken with the following specific objectives: (i) examine the country's economic performance since the turn of the millennium; (ii) analyse the characteristics of the youth labour market; (iii) highlight the recent major policies and programmes launched in India that aim to improve the labour market outcomes of the youth; and (iv) suggest innovative and sustainable strategies to support the youth to become a major catalyst of development processes, particularly in the context of ongoing technological transformations and the future of work.

This research study notes that the Indian economy has grown significantly since the turn of the millennium. It highlights that innovative structural reforms initiated in the last few years have enabled India to become the fastest growing major economy of the world. It also notes that stimulating manufacturing driven growth is pivotal to sustain high economic growth and that policies that nourish micro, small and medium enterprises to grow large and generate more productive jobs will be very significant in providing financial inclusion to the young population in the country.

From a labour market perspective, the study notes that the overall educational attainment of the labour force in India, particularly for the youth, has improved significantly in the last two decades. The Indian economy is also witnessing structural transformation of the labour market, i.e. movement from primary to secondary and tertiary sectors, which has gained pace in the last two decades. Considering that a significant percentage of youth are still engaged in informal employment, transitioning them to formal employment is very significant to improve labour market outcomes. The study outlines and analyses the innovative policies and programmes which have been initiated in India in the last few years with the objective of improving the access of young people to decent and productive employment and livelihood options.

The study identifies the pathways to promote better future of work for youth: employment-centred macroeconomic and sectoral policies; reorientation of the skill ecosystem; innovative use of technology and digital tools; re-regulation of the labour regulation systems; and a more technology enabled labour market information system, particularly with respect to new forms of employment.



(Dr. H. Srinivas)
Director General

Acknowledgements

This research study was carried out under the aegis of the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes. I am extremely grateful to the representatives of all the member Institutions who were part of this study for providing very useful comments and suggestions during the different stages of this research work.

Dr. Sher Verick, Employment Specialist, International Labour Organisation provided invaluable technical support for this research work and I express my warmest gratitude to him.

I also express my sincere gratitude to Dr. H. Srinivas, Director General, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute who was a great source of inspiration for undertaking and completing this research study.

I would like to express heartfelt thanks to my friends, Prabhu Mohapatra, Manoj Jatav, Abhishek, and Vinoj Abraham for providing invaluable research insights and support at different stages of this research study.

I received admirable research assistance from Ms. Sarika Kumari, Ms. Sudha Ganesh and Mr. Vikesh Kumar in the completion of this research study. I am so grateful for their meticulous support.

S.K. Sasikumar

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
MCCs	Model Career Centres
NCS	National Career Service
NEET	Not in Employment, nor in Education, nor in Training
NYP	National Youth Policy
PMKVY	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
WPR	Worker Population Ratio

Section 1

Introduction

India is at the cusp of a historic demographic transition. The country has the world's largest youth population (15-29 years) of around 360 million in 2019, i.e. one in every five young persons in the world is an Indian. In 2019, youth comprise around 27 per cent of the country's population and account for 40 per cent of the country's working age population (15-64 years). Although the proportion of youth population to the total population, as well as to the working age population, will experience decline in subsequent years due to a decline in India's population growth rate in the last two decades, youth will continue to be extremely significant in the country's demographic structure at least till 2030 (Table 1). With such immensity in numbers, this inherently dynamic and aspirational segment of the population has a huge potential to catalyse a major upsurge in the Indian economy and transition India into a developed country.

Table 1: India: Youth Population and Working Age Group Population

(in thousands)

	2015	2020	2025	2030
15-29 years	355,834	365,948	371,845	365,351
15-64 years	863,969	928,267	986,147	1,029,135
Total Population	1,310,152	1,380,004	1,445,012	1,503,642
% of Youth Population to Total Population	27.16	26.52	25.73	24.30
% of Youth Population to Working Age Group Population	41.19	39.42	37.71	35.50

Source: UNDESA, World Population Prospects 2019.

So far as the BRICS countries are concerned, the youth population in these countries comprises nearly 40 per cent of the total youth population of the world, with India accounting for the highest share of nearly 20 per cent in 2019 (Table 2).

India's demographic bulge around the age cohort of 15-29 years can translate into a demographic dividend depending on the country's capacity to utilise this vital pool of human resources by providing decent, productive employment and income-earning opportunities.

The massive implications for India's growth and development process of increasing decent employment and income-earning opportunities for the youth can be gauged from the fact that nearly one-third of the country's gross national income is currently estimated to be contributed by the youth (Government of India, National Youth Policy, 2014). An upswing in decent employment opportunities for youth will further scale up this contribution.

Table 2: Youth Population (15-29 Years) in BRICS Countries and the World

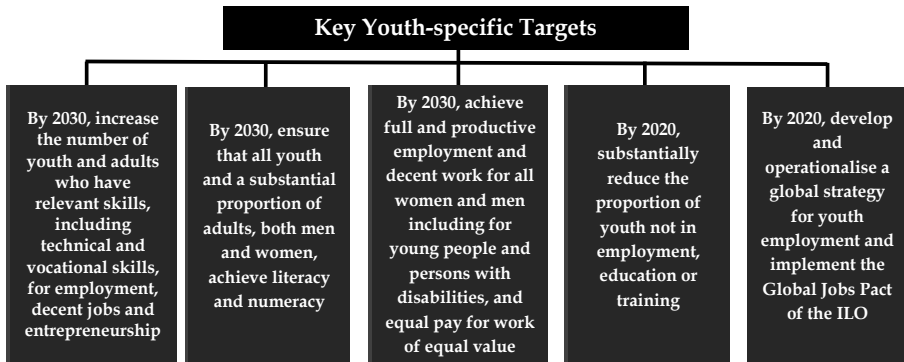
	2015	2020	2025	2030
India	355,834 (19.7)	365,948 (20.3)	371,845 (20.2)	365,351 (19.2)
BRICS	766,651 (42.4)	721,504 (40.0)	709,709 (38.6)	703,027 (37.0)
World	1,808,293	1,804,276	1,841,002	1,899,430

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate the proportion to the total world youth population.
Source: UNDESA, World Population Prospects 2019.

Any discussion of issues related to youth employment should also be situated within the context of rapid technological developments occurring across the world and their impacts on and implications for skills, work and work relations. Several scholarly studies on technology and work show that the pace and depth of technology transformations are dramatically altering the necessary skill sets for future jobs (ILO, 2019a; NASSCOM, FICCI & EY, 2017; WEF, 2018; World Bank, 2019). The technological changes are also enabling new forms of work (such as the economic activities associated with sharing economy) and paving the way for new forms of employment relations (such as one to many, many to one and many to many). These tendencies are challenging the already declining space of standard forms of employment. Such a scenario calls for evolving appropriate policy interventions to prepare the youth to respond to the challenges of change.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 clearly emphasise the catalytic power of youth employment in poverty alleviation, economic growth and prosperity for all. Figure 1 captures the key youth-specific targets of SDG 2030.

Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030



It is within this broad framework of demographic transition, technological transformations and desired development trajectories that the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes¹ carried out a research study focusing on the various dimensions of youth employment and related issues in the BRICS countries. The experience of different BRICS countries in responding to historic developments and preparing the youth to be at the forefront of development processes will be beneficial not only for the partnering countries but also for all the nations of the world, especially the young countries.

The research study in the context of India seeks to: (i) highlight the country's economic situation in terms of key growth parameters; (ii) analyse the characteristics of the youth labour market in the context of overall labour market developments in the country; (iii) examine the recent major policies and programmes launched in India that aim to improve the labour market outcomes of the youth; and (iv) suggest innovative and sustainable strategies to support the youth to become a major catalyst of development processes, particularly in the context of ongoing technological transformations and the future of work.

The approach to this study is grounded in the fundamental proposition that economic growth and the growth of decent employment, particularly

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1. Partnering institutions of the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes are:
 - (i) National Labour Market Observatory of the Ministry of Labour of Brazil, Brazil
 - (ii) All Russia Research Institute for Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation, Russia
 - (iii) V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, India
 - (iv) Chinese Academy of Labour and Social Security, China
 - (v) University of Fort Hare, Republic of South Africa

for youth, reinforce each other, subject to innovative policy interventions. These policy measures should be evolved with an integrated and multidimensional approach, striving to achieve a balance between the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of both economic development and employment.

The study is based on secondary sources of information and most of the analysis carried out covers the time span 2004-05 to 2017-18. Analysis relating to macroeconomic aggregates is mainly based on the gross domestic product (GDP) data published by the Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. We have also used data from the *World Economic Outlook* to facilitate international comparisons. The report has also used the ILOSTAT database, particularly to carry out analysis in relation to certain labour market and socioeconomic variables. The employment and labour market characteristics in the context of India are analysed based on the data generated through the Employment and Unemployment Surveys of the National Sample Survey, Government of India. These surveys were conducted quinquennially from 1972-1973 to 2011-2012, and they are a primary source of labour market data at the national and state levels in India. Considering the need and significance of labour force and employment data at more frequent intervals, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation subsequently decided to produce annual estimates of employment and unemployment characteristics for both rural and urban areas, along with quarterly estimates for urban areas through Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PFLS). The first such report, based on the data collected under the first Periodic Labour Force Survey in India during July 2017-July 2018, was published in May 2019. This data set, including its unit level data, has also been used extensively in this report.

The report is organised as follows. Section II provides an overview of India's economic growth and its related dimensions. Some of the key variables analysed include: real GDP growth, GDP per capita growth, sectoral shares and growth, working poverty and income inequality. Section III examines the characteristics and trends of the Indian labour market in terms of key indicators such as educational attainment of the labour force, labour force participation rates, worker population ratios, unemployment rates, NEET rates (not in employment, nor in education, nor in training), sectoral distribution of the workforce, and

employment status. The labour market characteristics are analysed mainly in relation to the youth labour force (15-29 years) and rest of the labour force (15 +age cohort and 30-64 years) in order to provide a comparative perspective. For important variables, analysis pertaining to the 15-29 age cohort is further disaggregated into 15-19, 20-24, 25-29 age groups. Section IV discusses some of the major policies and programmes initiated in India to improve labour market opportunities for the youth and also to enhance the related labour market outcomes. Section V highlights some of the major possible strategies to promote youth employment, particularly from the perspective of the ongoing and rapid technological transformations and the evolving future of work, in order to situate youth at the centre of the development process.

Section 2

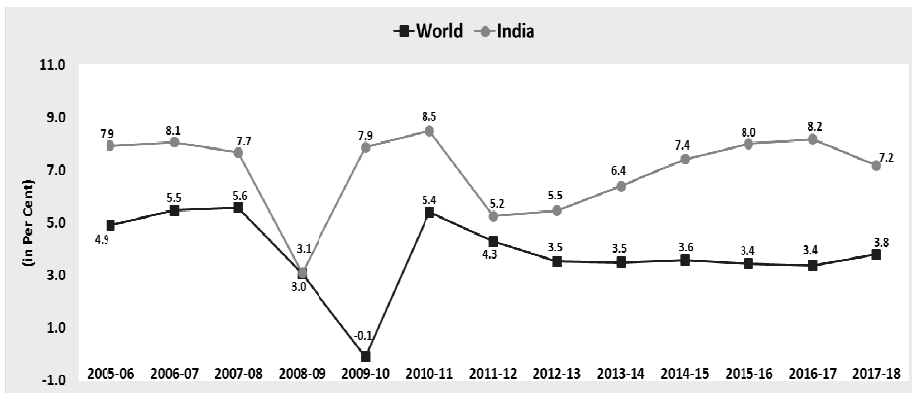
India's Economic Growth: An Overview

The Indian economy has grown significantly since the turn of the millennium. In fact, India was one of the few economies in the world to exhibit strong resilience even during the period of the global economic crisis. However, the global economic slowdown subsequent to the crisis contributed to the slackening of India's economic growth since 2010-11 (Figure 2). Subsequently, a series of structural reforms introduced by the Government of India since 2014-2015 – ranging from simplifications of the tax regime, massive infrastructure upgradation, promotion of wider digital penetration, financial inclusion, productivity enhancement programmes in different sectors, including agriculture, to the historic support to innovative outreach programme for micro, small and medium enterprises – has enabled the country's economic growth to pick up.

India has emerged as the fastest growing large economy in the world in 2018 despite a slight moderation in its GDP growth from 8.2 per cent in 2016-17 to 7.2 per cent in 2017-18, with the growth rate expected to gain momentum in the medium term.

Figure 2: Real GDP Growth: India and the World: 2005-06 to 2017-18

(in per cent)



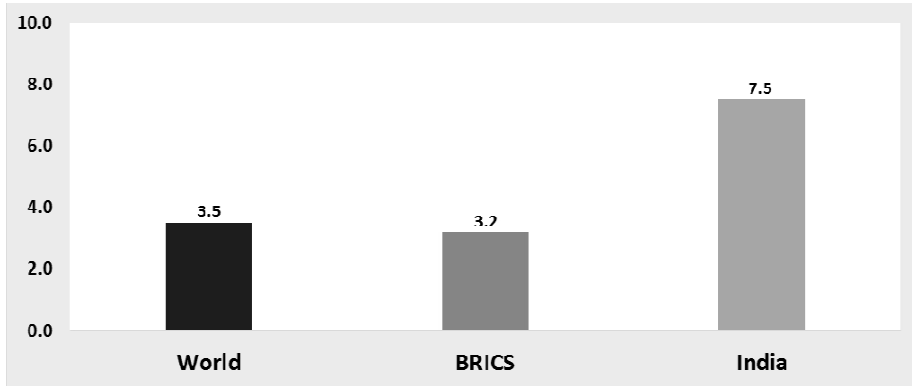
Sources: (1) India - CSO and (2) World - World Economic Outlook Database, April 2019.

The country's economic growth averaged 7.5 per cent during 2014-2019. This is more than double the world's economic growth rate and the average growth rate of the BRICS countries during the same period (Figure 3). In terms of GDP, India – an approximately \$1.85 trillion economy in 2014 – has grown to become a \$3 trillion economy in 2019. It is now the seventh

largest economy in the world in current US \$ and the third largest in terms of purchasing power parity adjustments.

Figure 3: Real GDP Growth: World, BRICS and India, 2014-2019

(Annual average percent change)



Source: World Economic Outlook, April 2019.

As per the recently released *Global Economic Prospects* (World Bank 2019), the Indian economy is projected to grow at 7 to 7.2 per cent in the next three years, supported by robust investment and private consumption. With this, India will retain the position of the fastest growing emerging economy. The report also notes that 'private consumption and investment will benefit from strengthening credit growth amid more accommodative monetary policy, with inflation having fallen below the Reserve Bank of India's target'. The pace and quality of growth over the medium term will be mainly determined by the continuation of the structural reforms initiated in recent years, particularly in areas such as the liberalisation of the economy's external interface, especially with foreign direct investment galvanising the business environment, and stepping up of agricultural growth and productivity. However, given that the persisting global slowdown may hamper India's growth prospects, it is important that the economic policy be re-calibrated to propel new drivers of growth. This is important considering that the current slowdown in the global economy does not bode well for future export growth.

The composition of real GDP growth in India during recent years clearly highlights that the major share of growth emanates from private final consumption expenditure, with the shares of government final consumption expenditure and gross fixed capital formation maintaining some sort of stability (Table 3). However, the slackening of export and

growth and the continuous increase in import have kept net exports unfavourable.

Table 3: Composition of Real Gross Domestic Product in India
(at 2011-12 prices)

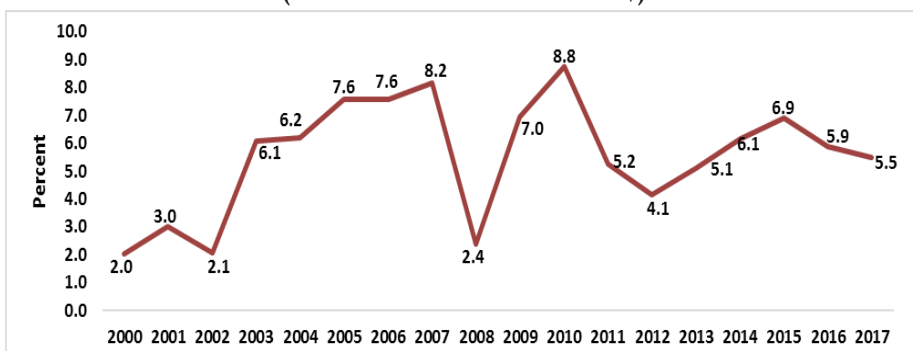
(in per cent)

Sector	Share		
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Private Final Consumption Expenditure	55.8	55.9	55.8
Government Final Consumption Expenditure	9.9	10.3	10.8
Gross Fixed Capital Formation	30.3	31.1	31.4
Change in Stocks	2.0	0.7	0.7
Valuables	1.6	1.3	1.9
Net Exports	-1.2	-1.0	-2.4
Exports	20.8	20.4	20.2
Less Imports	22.1	21.4	22.6
Discrepancies	1.6	1.6	1.7
GDP	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Reserve Bank of India, Annual Report 2017-18.

The significant upsurge in growth experienced during the last two decades, along with decline in the population growth rate, particularly since 2001, has led to a spurt in GDP per capita in India since the turn of the century (Figure 4). The overall trend in GDP per capita growth is in consonance with the GDP growth trajectory.

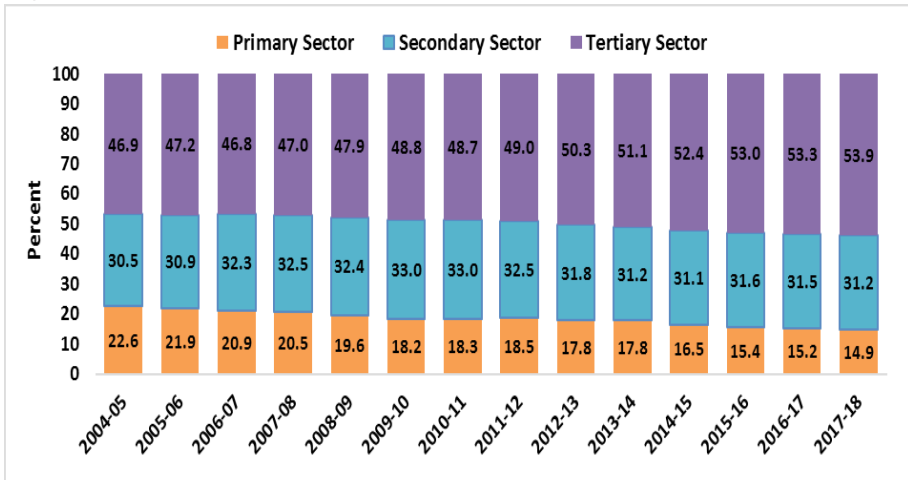
Figure 4: GDP Per Capita Growth in India: 2000-2017, PPP
(constant 2011 international \$)



Source: World Development Indicators, the World Bank.

An analysis of sectoral shares in the GDP clearly indicates a secular decline in the contribution of the primary sector, with a drop from 22.6 per cent in 2004-05 to 14.9 per cent in 2017-18 (Figure 5). Though the agriculture sector's contribution to the GDP has been dropping steadily, it is important to recognise its pivotal role in India's development process, considering that nearly half of the workforce is still engaged in agriculture. Most of the contributions to India's GDP growth have emanated from the tertiary (service) sector and accordingly its share has risen from 46.9 per cent in 2004-05 to 53.9 per cent in 2017-18. In the tertiary sector, the major contribution has stemmed from two sub-sectors – finance, business and real estate and trade, hotel and restaurant – which together accounted for more than one-third of the total tertiary share in the GDP in 2017-18.

Figure 5: Sectoral Shares in Gross Value Added in India (Constant 2011-12)



Source: CSO India.

One of the concerns in relation to India's growth process is that the secondary sector has remained almost stagnant even at a time when the Indian economy has experienced high growth. What is disconcerting is that the manufacturing share has not expanded as much as expected during the last two decades in spite of several policy interventions aimed at stimulating its growth. In fact, the manufacturing share has registered only a marginal increase of 2.4 percentage points – from 15.6 per cent in 2004-05 to 18 per cent in 2017-18 – during 2004-05 and 2017-18 in terms of sectoral contributions. Within manufacturing, growth has often been highest in sectors that are relatively capital-intensive, such as automobiles and pharmaceuticals. Several studies argue that manufacturing-driven

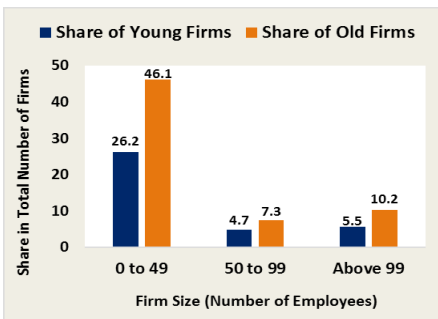
growth is pivotal to sustain high economic growth as it offers economies of scale, embodies technological progress, and generates forward and backward linkages that create positive spillover effects in the economy (IHD, 2016).

It is necessary to fully understand the existing structure of manufacturing industries to evolve relevant policy measures to stimulate the growth and employment potential of the sector. The *Economic Survey of India 2018-2019* presents a comprehensive analysis of the structure of organised manufacturing in India based on the firm-level data of the *Annual Survey of Industries* for the latest available year, 2016-2017. This analysis regards firms employing less than 100 workers as ‘small’ and those employing more than 100 as relatively ‘large’. Further, firms which are both small and are older than 10 years have been referred to as ‘dwarfs’ as they exhibit a stunted growth.

While firms in the ‘dwarf’ category account for half of all firms in organised manufacturing, their share in employment was just 14.1 per cent and in productivity a mere 8 per cent (Figures 6a, 6b and 6c). Young large firms (those which are less than 10 years old and employ more than 100 workers), on the other hand, account for only 5.5 per cent of the firms in terms of number but 21.2 per cent in employment and 37.2 per cent in productivity.

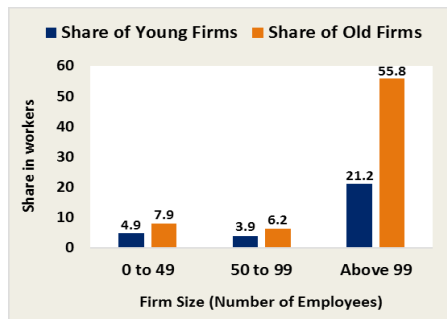
Creating an enabling policy environment for ‘small’ firms to grow ‘large’ is thus critical in promoting manufacturing growth and generating productive employment in larger numbers.

Figure 6a: Share of Dwarfs versus Others in Number of Firms (as of 2016-17)

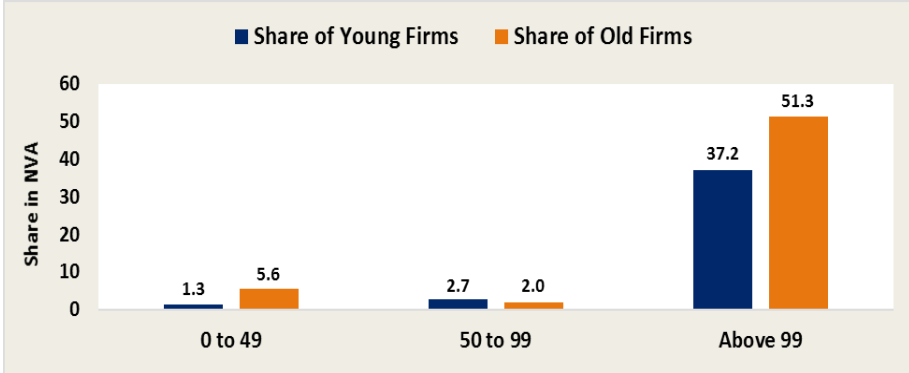


Source: Economic Survey 2018-19.

Figure 6b: Share of Dwarfs versus Others in Employment (as of 2016-17)



Source: Economic Survey 2018-19.

Figure 6c: Share of Dwarfs versus Others in Net Value Added (as of 2016-17)

Source: Economic Survey 2018-19, Government of India.

An analysis of the year-on-year growth rate of the various sectors provides interesting insights (Table 4). Some of the major sectors like agriculture and manufacturing have shown considerable fluctuation in their growth trajectory during 2005-06 to 2017-18.

Table 4: Sectoral Growth Rates in India: 2005-06 to 2017-18 (constant 2011-12)
(in per cent)

Sectors	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Agriculture & Allied	4.8	2.9	5.5	-0.2	-0.9	8.8	6.4	1.5	5.6	-0.2	0.6	6.3	5.0
Mining & Quarrying	6.1	4.7	4.6	-2.5	6.0	13.5	-17.5	0.6	0.2	9.7	10.1	9.5	5.1
Manufacturing	9.3	17.8	7.0	4.7	11.0	7.7	3.1	5.5	5.0	7.9	13.1	7.9	5.9
Electricity, Gas & Water supply	6.3	8.0	8.4	4.9	5.9	7.1	8.6	2.7	4.2	7.2	4.7	10.0	8.6
Construction	12.9	10.7	11.7	5.6	6.8	6.1	13.1	0.3	2.7	4.3	3.6	6.1	5.6
Trade, Hotel & Restaurants	10.4	10.2	6.2	1.0	3.1	15.5	5.8	11.1	5.4	9.8	11.1	10.1	10.0
Transport, Storage & Communication	7.8	7.7	8.9	4.9	11.4	6.0	7.3	7.6	8.4	8.8	8.9	3.4	3.6
Finance, Business, Real Est.	9.5	7.4	7.8	5.2	6.5	4.7	4.5	9.7	11.2	11.0	10.7	8.7	6.2
Public, Social and Other Services	7.9	2.9	8.8	15.8	16.1	7.6	7.3	4.3	3.8	8.3	6.1	9.2	11.9
GVA	8.3	8.1	7.4	4.3	6.9	8.0	5.2	5.4	6.1	7.2	8.0	7.9	6.9

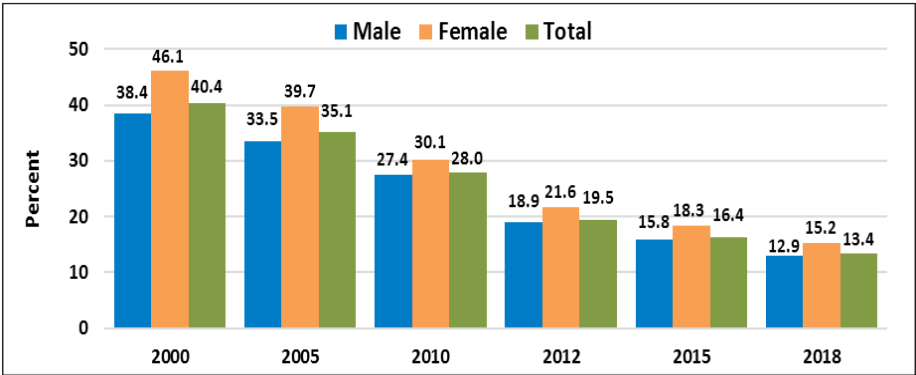
Source: CSO India.

The construction sector, which had experienced very high growth prior to 2011-12, registered a significant decline post 2011-12. Finance, business and real estate and trade, hotel and restaurant are two sub-sectors of the economy showing consistency in terms of growth over the last two decades and, as noted earlier, are the major contributors to the spurt in India’s growth.

Estimates of the working poverty rate in India - i.e. percentage of employed persons living below US \$ 1.90 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) per day - for the period 2000-2018 clearly indicate that the poverty rates have continuously declined for both males and females; the overall rate has fallen significantly from 40.4 per cent in 2000 to 13.4 per cent in 2018 (Figure 7). Similar trends in poverty reduction are observed in relation to young workers in the age cohort 15-24 years (Figure 8). Such a remarkable drop in poverty rates is the outcome of numerous initiatives undertaken at the national and state levels to supplement the means of livelihood of poor households.

However, it is disturbing that the poverty rate among the youth is relatively high in relation to the overall working poverty rates. This indicates that a sizeable proportion of youth and new labour market entrants are engaged in low paid wage work and less remunerative self-employment in the informal economy. Strategies to transition such informal employment with low remuneration among the youth to formal employment with better income-earning prospects will be pivotal to maximise the labour market outcomes arising from the youthful population and also to achieve SDG 1, which aims to ‘end poverty in all its forms everywhere’.

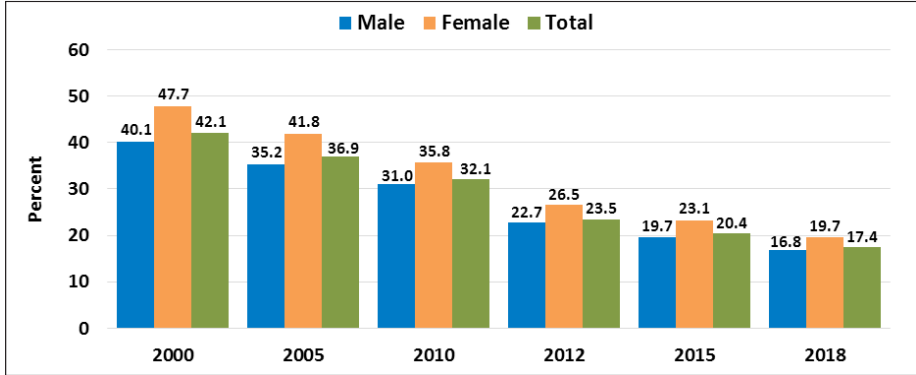
Figure 7: India: Working Poverty Rate (15+ years)
(in per cent)



Source: ILOSTAT.

Figure 8: India: Working Poverty Rate (15-24 years)

(in per cent)



Source: ILOSTAT.

Discussions around inequality in the domain of income, wealth and labour market have attracted attention in the public policy discourse in recent decades. Though inequality has different dimensions, in India there has been a tendency to use the expenditure data from National Sample Surveys as the main source of information for analysing long-term trends in economic inequality. Table 5 depicts the Gini Coefficient household expenditure per capita for the period 1983 to 2011-12. It is clear that inequality began to rise from the end of the 1990s. Urban inequality is greater than rural inequality. The ratio of urban to rural expenditure has also fallen over time, widening the gap.

Table 5: Inequality of Per Capita Household Expenditure, 1983 to 2011-12

	1983	1993-1994	1999-2000	2004-2005	2009-2010	2011-2012
Gini Coefficient of Household Expenditure Per Capita						
Rural	0.304	0.286	0.258	0.305	0.300	0.311
Urban	0.339	0.344	0.341	0.376	0.393	0.390
Total	0.326	0.326	0.325	0.363	0.37	0.375
Rural-Urban Ratio of Mean Per Capita Expenditure						
	0.68	0.61	0.57	0.52	0.52	0.54

Source: National Sample Survey (various rounds).

Key Highlights of the Section

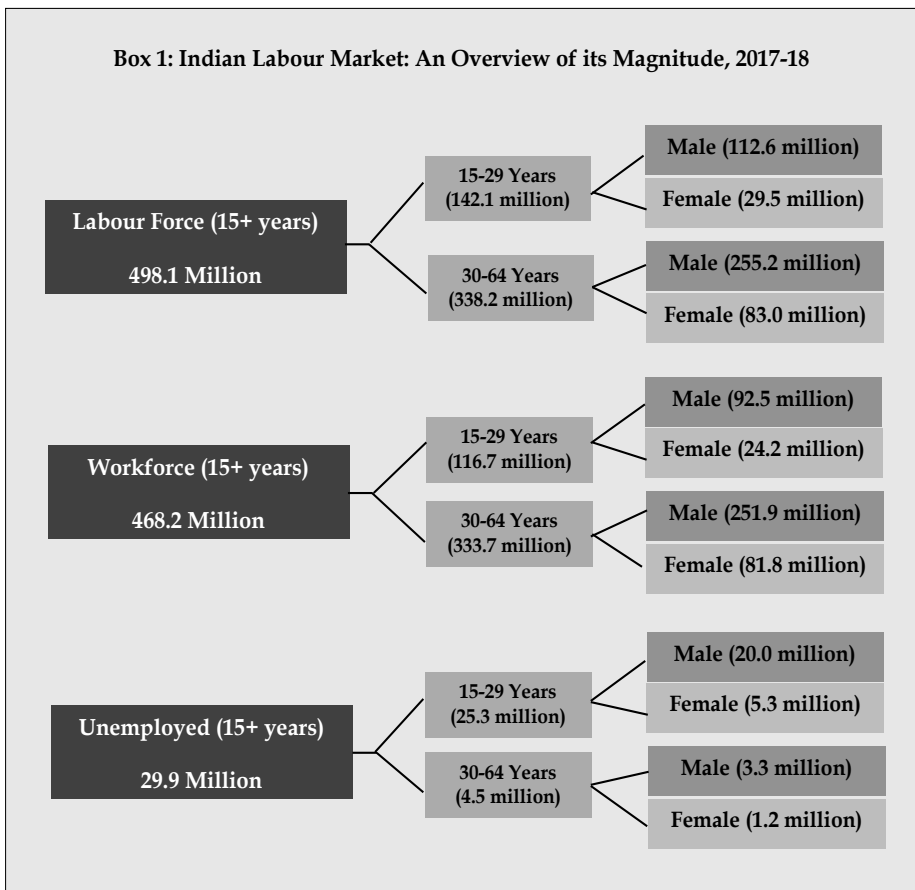
- The Indian economy has grown significantly since the turn of the millennium.
- Innovative structural reforms initiated during the last few years have enabled India to become the fastest growing major economy of the world.
- Given the persisting global economic slowdown, there is a need to re-strategise economic policy to propel new drivers of growth. This is important considering that the slowdown does not bode well future export growth.
- The major share of India's growth emanates from private final consumption expenditure.
- There has been rapid growth in GDP per capita in India since the turn of the century, with the growth during 2014-2019 being nearly three times that in the early 2000s.
- The service sector continues to be the mainstay of the Indian economy with the major contribution stemming from two sub-sectors – finance, business and real estate and trade, hotel and restaurant – which together accounted for more than one-third of the total share in GDP in 2017-18.
- The manufacturing sector at present merely accounts for less than one-fifth of India's GDP. Stimulating manufacturing-driven growth is pivotal to sustain high economic growth. Policies that nourish micro, small and medium enterprises to grow large and generate more productive jobs will be very significant in providing financial inclusion to the young population.
- Working poverty has declined significantly from 40.4 per cent in 2000 to 13.4 per cent in 2018. However, the poverty rate of the youth is high in relation to the overall working poverty rates.
- Strategies to transition youth engaged in informal employment with low remuneration to formal employment with better income-earning prospects will be pivotal to achieve SDG 1 which aims to 'end poverty in all its forms everywhere'.

Section 3

Key Indicators of India's Labour Market

In this section, we analyse the basic features of the Indian labour market particularly in relation to the youth. The labour market characteristics are analysed mainly in relation to the youth labour force (15-29 years) and rest of the labour force in order to provide a comparative perspective. For important variables, analysis pertaining to the 15-29 age cohort is further disaggregated into 15-19, 20-24, 25-29 age groups. All the indicators are evaluated during the period 2004-2005 to 2017-2018 and across gender.

Box 1 provides a snapshot of the size of India's labour market in 2017-2018.



Youth population constitute 37.2 per cent of India's population in the age group 15+. The total labour force of youth numbering to 142.1 million accounts for 28.5 per cent of the work force above the age group 15+. However, youth workforce constitute a relatively lower proportion of 24.9 per cent of the total workforce in the age group 15+. The absolute size of India's unemployed is estimated at 29.9 million in 2017-2018 and what is significant is to note that nearly 87 per cent of the unemployed (i.e. 25.3 million) are constituted by the youth. It is very evident that creation of more employment opportunities for the youth and reduction of unemployment among youth should achieve paramount significance in terms of labour and employment policies.

We now analyse the trends relating to the general and vocational education of India's labour force. Analyses of general educational attainment of youth and of the labour force as a whole (15+ age cohort) provide important insights. It is quite clear that the overall level of educational attainment has improved significantly across women and men both in rural and urban areas (Table 6). While the proportion of persons of below middle school-level education has declined substantially over the last two decades, the proportion of those with secondary education and above has risen sharply. It is equally important to note that the improvements in education have been substantial for the relatively more vulnerable categories. For instance, the proportion of rural female youth with educational attainment above the secondary level has recorded an increase of nearly 25 percentage points during 2004-05 to 2017-18. On the flip side, a major area of concern relates to women: even today, a very large proportion of women, particularly in the rural areas, belong to the Not Literate category. In fact, one in seven young women in the rural areas falls in this category. Continued emphasis on providing general education, particularly in rural areas, and simultaneously improving the overall quality of general education are important from the perspective of preparing new job entrants to respond to the emerging labour market requirements.

Table 6: General Educational Level in India (15-29 Years and 15+ Years), 2004-05 to 2017-18

(in per cent)

Year	Not Literate				Literate & Upto Primary				Middle				Secondary & Above			
	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female
15-29 Years																
2004-05	17.4	37.7	7.8	14.4	27.4	24.4	18.5	17.2	26.9	19.4	25.0	21.6	28.3	18.5	48.7	46.7
2011-12	10.0	21.9	5.4	9.3	20.7	23.3	14.2	12.8	26.3	22.5	19.8	18.4	43.1	32.3	60.6	59.5
2017-18	5.9	13.4	3.7	5.6	12.8	16.0	10.0	9.1	28.7	27.2	20.5	19.9	52.6	43.4	65.8	65.4
15+ Years																
2004-05	32.0	58.5	12.1	27.9	27.7	19.9	20.2	19.7	19.1	11.3	19.4	16.8	21.1	10.2	48.3	35.6
2011-12	25.3	47.5	9.9	22.6	24.7	21.3	16.5	17.0	19.7	13.8	16.9	15.1	30.3	17.4	56.6	45.3
2017-18	22.5	41.8	9.3	20.8	17.9	17.7	14.0	14.5	23.8	17.8	19.9	18.3	35.8	22.7	56.7	46.4

Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

Formal vocational training is considered one of the core strategies to improve the employability of jobseekers and entrepreneurship skills of the potential self-employed people. Accordingly, a large number of initiatives have been taken in India over a period of time to strengthen the skill development and vocational training system. However, in spite of such enormous efforts, India still faces a major challenge in terms of formal vocational training. According to the latest available national estimates, only 2.5 per cent of youth and 2 per cent of those in the 15-59 years age cohort have acquired formal vocational/technical training in India (Table 7). This is quite low compared to the advanced and large and emerging economies where nearly 60-70 per cent of the youth on an average have received some formal vocational/technical training.

The expansion of formal vocational/technical training needs to be located at two levels: (i) in terms of those who are expected to enter the labour market in the coming years; and (ii) in relation to those who are already in the workforce but do not have the requisite formal vocational training. The National Skill Development Policy estimated that nearly 104.62 million new entrants to the labour force during 2015-2022 have to be provided with formal skill training. Additionally, nearly 300 million existing farm and non-farm workforce also needs to be skilled, re-skilled and up-skilled. The biggest challenge related to skill development in the country, particularly from the perspective of skilling the existing workforce, is that an overwhelming

proportion of the workers are engaged in informal sector activities. Given the wide heterogeneity associated with the informal economy, it is difficult to map the existing skills as well as gauge the emerging skill requirements. Massive skilling up of formal vocational training and skill development, especially through a decentralized approach in order to respond to the ground-level situation, is thus imperative to improve the job prospects as well as labour market outcomes of youth in India.

Table 7: Percentage of Persons (15-29 Years & 15-59 Years) who Received Formal Vocational/Technical Training, 2011-12 to 2017-18

(in per cent)

Year	15-29 Years			15-59 Years		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
2011-12	2.7	2.1	2.4	2.6	1.6	2.2
2017-18	2.8	2.2	2.5	2.3	1.7	2.0

Source: NSS on Employment Survey (2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

The skill development strategies should also take into utmost consideration the on-going technological transformations and its implications for skill demand in the future. Studies on future of jobs clearly reveal that a significant proportion of the workforce that would be deployed in coming years will be in jobs that have radically changed skill sets. NASSCOM, FICCI and EY (2017) notes that such a tendency is more pronounced in certain modern and growing sectors like IT/BPM and BFSI (Table 8).

Table 8: Future of Job in the Organised Sector in India, 2022

Sectors	Workforce that		
	would be deployed in new jobs that do not exist today (projected for 2022)	would be deployed in jobs that have radically changed skill sets (projected for 2022)	will face an existential threat to their jobs (for 2017)
IT/BPM	10%-20%	60%-65%	20%-35%
Automotive	5%-10%	50%-55%	10%-15%
Textiles and Apparel	5%-10%	35%-40%	15%-20%
BFSI	15%-20%	55%-60%	20%-25%
Retail	5%-10%	20%-25%	15%-20%

Source: NASSCOM, FICCI and EY, 2017.

As regards the specific skill sets, studies note that while there is an increase in demand for non-routine cognitive and socio-behavioural

skills, these in a perceptible decline in demand for routine specific skills. It is also reported that possessing combination of skills, like technical skills along with problem solving skills, will continuously scale up employability.

The dynamics of labour force participation rates (LFPRs) in India, particularly for youth, have shifted significantly in the last two decades. At the national level, there has been a persistent decline in the proportion of persons/youth in the labour force, i.e. those who are either employed or unemployed. As regards the overall participation rates (15+age cohort), this has declined by nearly 14 percentage points between 2004-2005 to 2017-2018, with the drop in the female LFPR being much sharper (19.4 percentage points) compared to the male LFPR (8.2 percentage points) (Table 9). A similar trend is visible in terms of the youth LFPR (15-29 years) with a decline of 18.4 percentage points in the overall rate, and drops of 20.7 percentage points and 15.8 percentage points for male and female participation respectively. Such a plunge in LFPRs for youth is in consonance with the global trends where this rate has slumped by 9.3 percentage points during 1997-2017, from 55 per cent in 1997 to 45.7 per cent in 2017 (ILO, 2017).

Table 9: Labour Force Participation Rates in India, (UPSS)

Age Group	2004-05			2011-12			2017-18		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15-19	48.8	28.1	39.3	31.1	14.3	23.5	24.1	5.7	15.7
20-24	85.4	38.5	61.9	74.7	26.5	50.9	68.8	18.3	43.8
25-29	97.4	45.8	71.5	95.9	33.2	63.9	94.1	26.2	59.8
15-29	74.6	37.1	56.4	63.6	24.4	44.6	58.8	16.4	38.2
30-64	95.7	50.5	73.2	95.8	38.4	67.2	94.0	30.2	62.0
15+	84.0	42.7	63.7	79.8	31.2	55.9	75.8	23.3	49.8

Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

Similar trends are also visible across different sub-groups within the youth and also the age cohort 30-64 years albeit with differing levels of participation rates. While decline in participation rates in lower age cohort like 15-19 years and 20-24 years could partly be explained in terms of improved educational attainment, what is of utmost concern is that the participation rates are falling sharply for the higher age cohort like 20-25 years and 30-64 years where one is generally expected to be within labour force.

While male participation rates in the upper age cohort are declining marginally, they are still relatively very high (nearly 94 per cent), the female participation rates even in the upper age cohort are declining very sharply and remain at relatively very low levels. Consequently, the gender gaps have persisted and widened across all age cohort. In fact, in the case of one of the most productive age groups 25-29 years, the male-female participation gaps is as high as 68 percentage points.

Persistently low female participation rates and the consequent gender gap have been noted as key factors in hampering a country's growth potential. According to the McKinsey report, *The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equity in India Gender Parity (2015)*, merely by halving the gender gap in the LFPR between 2012 and 2025, India can add US \$ 700 billion to the GDP and 1.4 per cent to the annual GDP growth rate.

It is important to note that the gender differentials in the youth LFPR are increasing in India, with the gender differentials in the overall labour force participation increasing from 37.5 percentage points in 2004-2005 to 42.4 percentage points in 2017-2018. The decline in the female LFPR and the widening gender differentials have attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years. Rising family incomes and the resultant withdrawal of women especially from subsidiary employment, increasing educational participation, mechanisation in agriculture and the resultant fall in employment in agriculture have been identified by different studies as major factors in the decline of women's participation in the labour force (Dasgupta and Sher Verick 2016; Mehrotra and Parida 2017).

There is a clear relationship between rising educational attainment and falling LFPRs, particularly among younger age cohorts. Though the increased emphasis on primary and secondary education may have an adverse impact on the female LFPR in the short run, it is expected to usher in new labour market prospects for women with higher educational attainment in the longer run. Focusing on higher educational attainment among women and imparting relevant vocational training and education will be crucial for ensuring a rise in women's LFPR.

Some studies note that the mechanisation of agriculture taking place in India in recent years – particularly in activities favoured by women workers (threshing, winnowing, etc.) – have resulted in loss of work for women. Considering that women generally have lower educational attainment and also lower levels of skills, they are not in a position to compete for job opportunities emerging in the manufacturing sector. Rising family incomes

have also resulted in women, especially those engaged in subsidiary employment, withdrawing from the labour force and focusing solely on domestic duties.

The worker population ratios (WPRs) exhibit a declining trend across different age groups and gender over the period 2004-2005 to 2017-2018 (Table 10). However, the rates of decline across age groups as also between males and females are significantly different. From a comparative perspective, the WPR for all age groups (15+) and 30-64 age cohorts are significantly higher than that for the youth. However, an overall decline in the WPR for all age groups is a clear indication that the employment absorption capacity of the economy is diminishing over time. The rate of decline is a more serious concern in the context of women as it is falling from an already low WPR level. Decline in WPR for younger women also indicates that among those who enter the labour force, the possibilities of obtaining employment are decreasing. It is of paramount importance to put strategies in place to stimulate the employment intensity of growth processes in India. Lack of adequate employment opportunities for those seeking work may cause the discouragement effect to set in and could lead to a further fall of LFPRs.

Table 10: Worker Population Ratios in India (UPSS)

Age Group	2004-05			2011-12			2017-18		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15-19	45.3	26.8	36.8	28.1	13.4	21.4	17.4	4.8	11.6
20-24	79.8	35.3	57.5	69.2	24.1	46.9	52.9	13.5	33.4
25-29	94.9	43.7	69.1	93.0	31.7	61.7	84.5	23.0	53.4
15-29	70.7	34.9	53.3	59.8	22.8	41.9	48.3	13.5	31.4
30-64	95.3	50.0	72.8	95.4	38.2	66.9	92.8	29.8	61.1
15+	82.2	41.6	62.2	78.1	30.5	54.7	71.2	22.0	46.8

Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

Table 11 presents the unemployment rates across different age cohort in India during 2004-05 to 2011-12. It is quite evident that the unemployment rates which were relatively stable during 2004-05 to 2011-12 has risen significantly during the subsequent period i.e. 2011-12 to 2017-18. Such a rise is visible across all age cohorts. The overall unemployment rates (15+ years) have almost tripled from a very low level of 2.1 per cent in 2004-05 to 6 per cent in 2017-18.

Table 11: Unemployment Rates in India (UPSS)

(in per cent)

Age Group	2004-05			2011-12			2017-18		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15-19	7.2	4.6	6.4	9.8	6.3	8.9	27.6	16.1	25.7
20-24	6.5	8.1	7.0	7.2	9.2	7.8	23.0	26.2	23.7
25-29	2.6	4.6	3.3	3.1	4.6	3.5	10.2	12.3	10.6
15-29	5.2	5.9	5.4	5.9	6.6	6.1	17.8	17.9	17.8
30-64	0.4	0.9	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.4	1.3	1.4	1.3
15+	2.1	2.6	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.1	6.1	5.6	6.0

Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

The youth unemployment rate which was almost double the overall adult unemployment rate in 2004-05 have tripled in 2017-18 with the youth unemployment rate registering a steep increase from 5.4 per cent in 2004-05 to 17.8 per cent in 2017-18. While the overall youth unemployment rate and the unemployment rate among different sub-groups of the youth had remained in single digits till 2011-12, the rates have all moved to double digits in 2017-18. The highest unemployment rate within the youth are reported in 20-24 age group, where almost one in four youth report unemployment. The lowest unemployment rate, as expected, is reported in the age group 30-64 years with the rates (1.3 per cent) being 14 times lower than the unemployment rate for youth (17.8 per cent).

As regards the gender differentials, the female unemployment rates are almost the same as male unemployment rates in most age groups, and even higher in certain age groups like 20-24 years and 25-29 years. The high levels of unemployment rates among females presents a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, labour market is characterised by a lower labour participation rate, while on the other, those who enter the labour market are finding it difficult to secure jobs.

Among the youth, while the rural male youth unemployment is higher than the rural female youth employment, urban female unemployment (which has the highest rate amongst the different categories) is significantly higher than urban male unemployment (Table 12). In fact, among different categories, the highest youth unemployment rate is recorded by urban females, with more than one-fourth of those seeking work not obtaining it. Such high rates of youth unemployment are a serious policy concern as they can trigger social instabilities.

Table 12: Unemployment Rates among Youth (15-29 Years) (UPSS)
(in per cent)

Year	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female
2004-05	3.9	4.2	8.8	14.9
2011-12	5.0	4.8	8.1	13.1
2017-18	17.4	13.6	18.7	27.2

Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

Considering that improving the labour market participation rate of women is very important objective in the development process of India, it becomes extremely important to provide adequate employment opportunities for young women to ensure gender equality in the labour market.

Table 13 presents the unemployment rates across different age cohorts of jobseekers according to educational attainment during the period 2004-2005 to 2017-2018. It is evident that the unemployment rates among the youth population and the different age-cohorts within the youth is rising with higher levels of educational attainment. Consequently, the unemployment rates reported are the highest among those with educational attainment, graduate and above and those with diploma/certificate courses.

Table 13: Unemployment Rates according to Educational Attainment, 2017-18
(in per cent)

Age Group	Illiterate	Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Diploma/Certificate Course	Graduate & Above	Total
20-24	7.7	3.6	9.9	16.0	17.7	26.1	44.4	49.3	23.7
25-29	2.2	0.7	2.9	5.4	6.8	12.1	25.6	26.4	10.6
15-29	7.1	5.3	9.3	13.7	14.4	21.1	37.3	35.9	17.8
30-64	0.4	0.7	0.8	1.2	1.2	2.2	4.3	4.0	1.3

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

The development experience of the advanced economies had clearly indicated that higher levels of educational attainment lead to better employment prospects and reduction in unemployment. However, in the context of developing countries like India, we see a trend contrary to this historical experience. The rise in unemployment rates among those with higher educational attainment could be attributed to a host of factors. Higher educational attainment will obviously scale up the labour

market aspirations of the youth and this may influence youth to wait for a longer period to secure desired job options. Second, though the general educational attainment may be rising, employability may not be scaling up. Hence the employers may not be finding the requisite qualities in everyone with higher levels of education. Reorienting the educational curricula and infusing a greater synergy between general and vocational education will be pivotal to improve employability. The restructuring of the curricula should also aim to achieve the right blend of cognitive and behavioural skills to improve the employability of new jobseekers. Additionally, counseling based on appropriate aptitude assessments should start at the middle level of schooling in order to facilitate effective school to work transition and improving labour market opportunities for the youth.

The share of youth who are not in employment nor in education nor in training in the youth population (NEET rate) is emerging as a critical indicator in labour markets across the world. An analysis of the trends in the NEET rate can provide valuable policy inputs to deal with aspects such as school dropouts, school to work transition, labour market discouragement, etc. which have a direct bearing on overall youth labour market outcomes. The NEET rate also serves as a broader measure of potential youth labour market entrants who could contribute to development by engaging in economic activities.

The NEET rate can also provide vital information complementary to LFPRs and unemployment rates. For instance, a high youth NEET rate and a low youth unemployment rate implies significant discouragement for young people. Similarly, a high NEET rate among young women may suggest their increasing involvement in domestic duties on the one hand and/or the presence of institutional barriers deterring female participation.

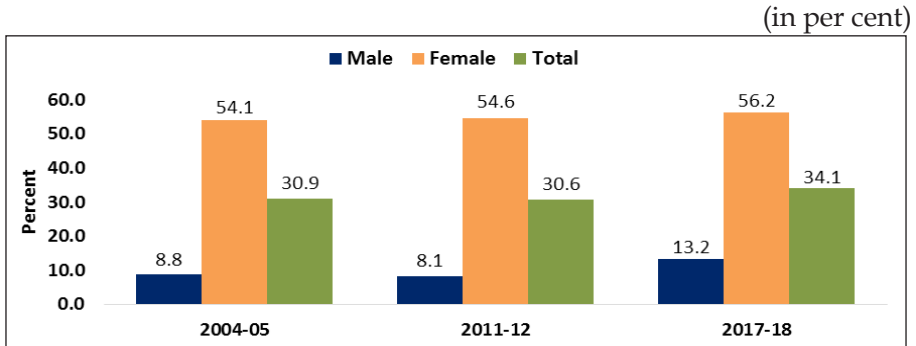
ILO (2019b) estimates that, in 2018, nearly 31 per cent of the young people (15-24) globally were neither in employment nor in education or training, the major proportion of them being females. It points out that this would imply that one out of every five young persons in the world is at the risk of economic and social exclusion. The importance of operationalising strategies to immediately reduce the NEET rate can be gauged from the fact that Target 8.6 of SDG 2030 stipulates that 'by 2020 substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training'.

An analysis of the NEET rates in India for the youth population as a whole and across age cohorts within the youth population, reveals interesting insights. The overall NEET rates for youth in India have registered an

increase of more than 3 percentage points during 2004-05 to 2017-18 (Figure 9). While the NEET rates for females, which is at a very high of 56.2 per cent in 2017-18 have remained at high levels for nearly two decades, the NEET rates for young men have increased significantly over the period. In spite of this increase in male rates, gender differentials in NEET rates are still very pronounced with the rates for females being four times higher than those reported for males in 2017-18.

Recent studies examining the declining LFPRs have clearly shown that more and more women across all age groups in India are increasingly citing domestic duties as the reason for staying away from the workforce. Such a tendency is keeping the NEET rates very high and opens up several policy derivatives.

Figure 9: NEET Rate among Youth in India



Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

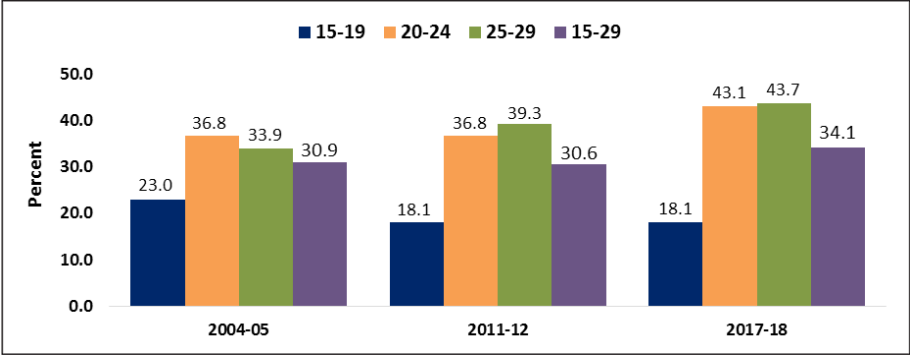
Most importantly, there is a strong need to understand whether it is the discouragement effect or/and other institutional factors (like discrimination at work) which holds back women, including the young and educated, from entering the labour force. Considering that educational attainment among women is increasing at an accelerated pace, policy interventions (such as customised job-related counselling for women, incentives to employers to employ women, and improving security for women workers at the workplace) should be urgently evolved to encourage more women to enter the labour force. From a social welfare perspective, enhanced maternity benefits for women (such as the recent initiative in India to increase the period of maternity benefits from 12 weeks to 26 weeks) can also have a favourable impact on the retention of women in the workforce.

NEET rates across different age cohorts within the youth population show that while the rates are lowest and are declining in the 15-19 age

group, they are high and rising for 20-24 and 25-29 age groups (Figure 10). From the policy perspective, the prevalence of high NEET rates in the 25-29 age cohort should receive maximum priority. This age cohort is the most productive age group; it would include those who have completed their education and also those who may have been trying to secure jobs or have worked for a period of time. A high NEET rate for this age cohort could also be an indicator of discouragement among this category of jobseekers.

Figure 10: NEET Rate by Age Groups

(in per cent)

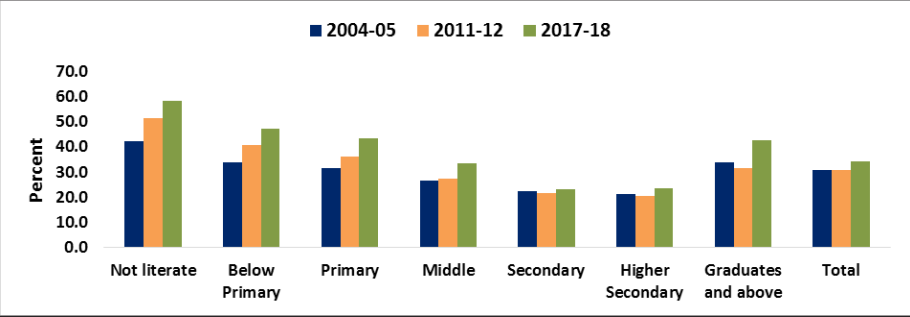


Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

So far as NEET rates across educational attainments are concerned, the rates are higher for those with lower levels of educational attainment and relatively low for those who have higher educational attainment (Figure 11).

Figure 11: NEET Rate by Education Level

(in per cent)



Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

High levels of NEET for those with lower educational attainment indicate that the employability of these jobseekers may be proportionally very low. However, it is also important to note that the NEET rates for the category 'Graduate and above' are fairly high. This may be due to the fact that those with high levels of educational attainment may have higher labour market aspirations.

The long-anticipated structural transformation of the labour market – the movement of workers from the less productive primary sector – has gained pace in India in recent years, with the share of the primary sector employment declining significantly for the workforce as a whole and the youth in particular. The drop is quite visible for both male and female workers, though the proportion of women workers in agriculture continues to remain above the halfway mark (Table 14). However, the shift of workers from agriculture to manufacturing, a key component of the secondary sector, continues to be slow. In fact, the proportion of total manufacturing employment to total employment has remained more or less stagnant in the last two or three decades; it was reported at a low of 12.13 percentage in 2017-18. Similar trends are also reported for the youth; the share of manufacturing employment in total youth employment was only 13.25 percentage in 2017-18.

Most of those moving out of agriculture have taken up employment in the construction sector; accordingly, there has been a sharp increase in construction employment during the last two decades. The proportion of workers (15+) in the construction sector has more than doubled from 5.6 per cent in 2004-05 to 11.57 per cent in 2017-18. A similar trend is also witnessed in the context of youth employment where the proportion of youth workers engaged in construction registered an increase from 6.9 per cent in 2004-05 to 13.8 per cent in 2017-18.

Major policy contours emerge from such trends. Most importantly, investment in manufacturing must be scaled up substantially so that the sector provides opportunities for youth, those with skills as well as those moving out of agriculture. There are both supply and demand considerations associated with this. From a supply perspective, as noted earlier, the scale of vocational skills needs to be scaled up massively among youth so that their employability is enhanced and there are more skilled youth available to respond to the demands of the manufacturing sector. From a demand perspective, youth must be provided appropriate incentives to start enterprises in the manufacturing sector so that they become job creators and do not remain mere jobseekers.

Table 14: Distribution of Employment by Sectors (UPSS)
(in per cent)

Sector	2004-2005			2011-2012			2017-2018		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15-29 Years									
Primary Sector	48.3	71.2	55.6	39.3	57.1	44.0	33.3	49.0	36.6
Secondary Sector	24.4	17.1	22.0	32.2	24.9	30.2	33.1	22.9	31.0
Tertiary Sector	27.3	11.7	22.4	28.5	18.0	25.7	33.6	28.0	32.4
30-64 Years									
Primary Sector	51.9	75.3	59.7	45.4	64.9	50.8	41.9	59.3	46.2
Secondary Sector	18.6	11.2	16.1	23.3	18.1	21.8	24.9	16.1	22.7
Tertiary Sector	29.6	13.5	24.2	31.3	17.0	27.3	33.2	24.6	31.1
15+ Years									
Primary Sector	50.6	73.9	58.3	43.6	62.7	48.8	40.7	57.1	44.5
Secondary Sector	20.6	13.1	18.1	25.9	20.0	24.3	26.5	17.6	24.4
Tertiary Sector	28.8	12.9	23.6	30.5	17.3	26.9	32.8	25.2	31.1

Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

The critical dimensions of the structure of the labour market and quality of employment are provided by the status of employment of the workforce. The predominance of self-employment is a distinctive feature of the Indian labour market. In fact, India is one of the few large economies where the proportion of self-employment is higher than that of those engaged in wage and salaried employment (Table 15). This is not surprising as nearly 45 per cent of the workforce is still engaged in agriculture, many of those being small, self-cultivating farmers.

The proportion of self-employed (15+) in the workforce has registered a decline of 4 percentage points in the last decade. This is mainly on account of people leaving agriculture in search of improved employment avenues in the secondary and tertiary sectors (Table 14). The proportion of youth who are self-employed is less than the overall proportion of self-employed in the country. What is significant is that an overwhelming proportion of those in self-employment are either own account workers or those who work as helpers in households. Given such a situation, improving the income earning of the self-employed and providing basic

social protection to these workers need to be positioned as key objectives of policy interventions.

It is important to note that there has been an increase in the employer category within the self-employed though it is still at a low level. This development has been mainly triggered by the ongoing big push to support youth, in particular, engaged in own enterprises. Another major positive development in the Indian labour market, including for the youth, has been the consistent increase in the proportion of regular workers within the wage and salaried category. It is encouraging that the proportion of regular workers has increased for both male and female youth.

An overwhelming presence of workers in informal employment continues to be a grave concern for emerging economies like India. Apart from 45 per cent of the labour force who are either own account workers or helpers in household enterprises, nearly one-fourth of the young workers (26.71 per cent) are engaged in casual work. Hence, around 70 per cent of the youth are presently engaged in informal employment. Transitioning informal employment to formal employment thus remains a core policy challenge.

Table 15: Status in Employment (UPSS)

(in per cent)

Category of Employment	2004-2005			2011-2012			2017-2018		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15-29 Years									
Self-Employed	49.4	60.0	52.8	42.6	55.5	46.0	41.6	51.1	43.5
Regular Salaried	17.0	8.6	14.4	22.5	16.0	20.8	29.8	25.2	28.8
Casual Labourer	33.5	31.4	32.8	34.9	28.4	33.2	28.6	23.7	27.6
30-64 Years									
Self-Employed	57.3	61.8	58.8	54.2	56.2	54.7	54.6	51.9	53.9
Regular Salaried	17.5	8.4	14.4	18.8	11.6	16.7	22.1	20.2	21.6
Casual Labourer	25.2	29.9	26.8	27.1	32.3	28.5	23.3	27.9	24.5
15+ Years									
Self-Employed	54.6	61.2	56.8	50.7	56.0	52.2	52.3	51.9	52.2
Regular Salaried	17.3	8.4	14.4	19.9	12.8	17.9	23.4	21.1	22.9
Casual Labourer	28.1	30.4	28.9	29.4	31.2	29.9	24.3	27.1	24.9

Source: NSS on Employment Surveys (2004-05 & 2011-12) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18).

Key Highlights of the Section

- Overall educational attainment of the labour force in India, particularly of the youth, has improved significantly in the last two decades.
- Improvements in education, especially secondary level and above, have been high for the relatively more vulnerable, such as rural female youth.
- India faces a major challenge in vocational training as only 2.5 per cent of the youth and 2 per cent of those in the 15-59 age cohort have acquired formal vocational training.
- The dynamics of labour force participation in India, particularly for youth, have shifted significantly in the recent decades with a persistent decline in the proportion of youth in the labour market.
- The participation of women/young women in the labour market has declined sharply and the gender gap in labour force participation is increasing.
- Worker population ratios across all categories of youth have also dropped in recent years.
- Youth unemployment rates have increased sharply during 2011-12 to 2017-18, with unemployment rates among urban females being the highest.
- Overall NEET rates in India are relatively very high. There exists significant gender gaps in NEET rates with NEET rates for females being four times higher than those for males.
- NEET rates are the highest in 20-24 and 25-29 age group, possibly indicating wider prevalence of discouragement.
- Structural transformation of the labour market, i.e. movement from primary to secondary and tertiary sectors, has gained pace in the last two decades.
- The relatively low share of manufacturing employment continues to be a major concern.
- The predominance of self-employment is a distinctive feature of India's labour market landscape.
- Around 70 per cent of youth are engaged in informal employment and transitioning them to formal employment remains a core policy challenge.
- Significant proportion of the workforce that would be deployed in coming years will be in jobs that have radically changed skill sets.

Section 4

Promoting Youth Employment: Policies and Programmes

This section outlines and analyses some of the major policies and programmes initiated in India during the period 2014-2019 with the objective of improving the access of young people to decent and productive employment and livelihood options.

Two National Policies

One of the major policy pronouncements related to youth has been the launch of the National Youth Policy in 2014 (NYP 2014) replacing the erstwhile National Youth Policy of 2003. NYP 2014 seeks to define a vision for the youth of the country. It identifies the core areas in which concrete action is required to enable holistic development of youth and provides a framework for requisite interventions.

The stated vision of NYP 2014 is: 'To empower youth of the country to achieve their full potential, and through them enable India to find its rightful place in the community of nations'. In order to realise this vision, the NYP 2014 identifies five clearly defined objectives and the priority areas under each of the objectives. (Table 16).

Table 16: Objectives, Priority Areas and Future Imperatives of National Youth Policy 2014

Objective	Priority	Future Imperatives
Create a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to India's economic development	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Build system capacity and quality▪ Promote skill development and lifelong learning
	Employment and Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Organise targeted youth outreach and awareness▪ Build linkages across systems and stakeholders▪ Define role of government vis-à-vis other stakeholders

	Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organise targeted youth outreach programmes ▪ Scale up effective programmes to build capacity ▪ Create customised programmes for youth entrepreneurs ▪ Implement widespread monitoring and evaluation systems
Develop a strong and healthy generation equipped to take on future challenges	Health and Healthy Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve service delivery ▪ Spread awareness of health, nutrition and preventive care ▪ Organise targeted disease control programmes for youth
	Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase access to sports facilities and training ▪ Promote sports culture among youth ▪ Support and develop talented sports persons
Instill social values and promote community service to build national ownership	Promotion of Social Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formalise value education system ▪ Strengthen engagement programmes for youth ▪ Support NGOs and for-profit organisations working to spread values and harmony
	Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leverage existing community development organisations ▪ Promote social entrepreneurship
Facilitate participation and civic engagement at all levels of governance	Participation in Politics and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage youth outside of the political system ▪ Create governance mechanisms that youth can leverage ▪ Promote youth engagement in urban governance
	Youth Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measure and monitor effectiveness of youth development schemes ▪ Create a platform for engagement with youth

Support youth at risk and create equitable opportunities for all disadvantaged and marginalised youth	Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organise enablement and capability building for disadvantaged youth ▪ Ensure economic opportunities for youth in conflict-affected regions ▪ Develop a multi pronged approach to supporting youth with disability ▪ Create awareness and opportunities to prevent youth being put at risk
	Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leverage youth to eliminate unjust social practices ▪ Strengthen access to justice at all levels

Source: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, National Youth Policy 2014.

Given that the creation of decent employment opportunities is vital to reap the benefits of the ongoing demographic transition, NYP 2014 appropriately accords top priority to aspects such as skill development, employment and entrepreneurship, which are pivotal for creating a productive workforce and improving quality employment. It is quite evident that the policy situates youth not only as jobseekers but also as job creators. This is vital as a large number of youth today have immense opportunities through the educational system to master entrepreneurial skills and management capabilities. Additionally, the youth are also ideally placed to take advantage of technological advancements by deploying the latest technical know-how in production and service processes.

Improving the skill base of the country in both quantitative and qualitative dimensions is a prerequisite for meeting the requirements of the knowledge economy and equipping youth to contribute to national development. In this context, the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship announced in 2015 (replacing the policy of 2009) sets the objective of skilling at scale with speed, standard (quality) and sustainability. It aims to provide an umbrella framework to all skilling activities being carried out within the country, in order to align them to common standards and link skilling with demand. In addition, the policy identifies the overall institutional framework that will act as a vehicle to reach the expected outcomes. The policy also clearly recognises that skill development is the shared responsibility of several key stakeholders – the government, industry, trade organisations, community-based organisations, highly qualified and dedicated individuals working in the area of skilling and entrepreneurship space for many years – and calls for strengthening inter- institutional and public-private partnerships

in augmenting the skill base of the country. The policy links skill development to improved employability and productivity in paving the way for inclusive growth in the country.

The skill strategy is complemented by specific efforts to promote entrepreneurship in order to create ample opportunities for the skilled workforce. The policy seeks to promote an entrepreneurial culture through advocacy and integration of entrepreneurship education as a part of formal/skill education, improve support for entrepreneurs in terms of credit and market linkages, foster innovation-driven and social enterprises, and improve ease of doing business. It also suggests ways to boost entrepreneurship among women besides endeavouring to meet the entrepreneurial needs of socially/geographically marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

In order to operationalise the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, the National Skill Development Mission was launched on 15 July 2015 on the occasion of World Youth Skills Day. It aims to create convergence and expedite cross-sectoral decisions through a high-powered decision-making framework. It coordinates, implements and monitors skilling activities on a pan-India basis.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana: Outcome Based Skill Development Scheme

Several pioneering programmes have been launched in recent years as a part of the expanding skilling outreach in India, with the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) being the flagship outcome-based skill development scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India. The fundamental objective of this programme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood. Individuals with prior learning experience or skills are also assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

The scheme was launched on 15 July 2015 (World Youth Skills Day). Owing to its successful implementation during 2015-16, the government extended PMKVY for another four years (2016-2020) to impart skilling to 10 million youth. The second phase of the scheme, launched on 2 October 2016, lays greater emphasis on improving the placement opportunities for candidates through high quality and standardised trainings. PMKVY (2016-2020) scheme is being implemented by the Centre along with the states through the National Skill Development

Corporation (NSDC). A dedicated monitoring team was set up in April 2017 to assess the performance of various components of the scheme across the country. Under the monitoring initiative, the team conducts surprise visits and analyses data to check for various compliances outlined in the PMKVY 2016-2020 guidelines. The technology-enabled PMKVY dashboard provides updated information on the progress of the different components of the scheme across the country on a real-time basis.

Short Term Training and Recognition of Prior Learning are the key components of the scheme. The Short Term Training imparted at PMKVY Training Centres (TCs) is expected to benefit youth who are either school/college dropouts or unemployed. Apart from training provided according to the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), training is imparted in soft skills, entrepreneurship, and financial and digital literacy. The duration of training varies per job role, ranging between 150 and 300 hours. Upon successful completion, candidates are provided placement assistance by Training Partners (TPs). Under PMKVY, the entire training and assessment fees are paid by the government. Trainings imparted under the Short Term Training component of the scheme conform to the NSQF Level 5 and below.

Individuals with prior learning experience or skills are assessed and certified under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) component of the scheme. RPL aims to align the competencies of the unorganised workforce of the country to the NSQF. This is a much-needed initiative as a large number of youth in India acquire skills informally. Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs), such as Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), implement RPL projects in RPL camps, employers' premises and RPL centres. To address knowledge gaps, PIAs offer bridge courses to RPL candidates. Most importantly, RPL recognises the value of learning acquired outside a formal setting and provides a government certificate for an individual's skills. MSDE is also operationalising a dedicated portal for the RPL programme that provides a platform for individuals to get information about RPL centres across the country and facilitates registration for the scheme.

Apart from these two core components, the special projects constituent of PMKVY envisages the creation of a platform that will facilitate trainings in special areas and special job roles not defined under the available Qualification Packs (QPs)/National Occupational Standards (NOSs). Special projects also include those that require some deviation from the terms and conditions of Short Term Training under PMKVY. Most

importantly, special projects target special population categories such as marginalised or vulnerable groups. Some of the special projects under PMKVY have forged interesting partnerships. To provide vulnerable youth, college dropouts, drug addicts, economically weak families in Delhi an opportunity to secure a life of respect, dignity and security, the special project YUVA, a collaboration between NSDC and Delhi Police, aims to skill them in various trades and facilitate employment opportunities for them. The 3000 youth (in the age group of 16-25 years) identified by Delhi Police in the capital region are being imparted skills through NSDC's approved training partners in skill development training centres in police stations across the capital city.

The performance of the major components of PMKVY in terms of key indicators is depicted in Table 17.

**Table 17: Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKY): 2016-2019
(as on 22 July 2019)**

	Short Term Training	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Enrolled Candidates	3,137,107	2,418,317
Ongoing Training	218,751	26,037
Trained/Oriented	2,901,522*	2,362,443**
Assessed Candidates	2,645,566	1,912,987
Passed Candidates	2,357,740	1,783,844
Total Certificate	2,323,699	1,689,755
Total Placed	1,254,729	-
Placement Rate	54%	-

Note: *Trained and **Oriented.

Source: <http://pmkvyofficial.org>

These two major schemes along with other constituents of PMKVY, have made impressive progress with nearly 60-65 per cent of the target of 10 million met already. What is of utmost significance is that more than 55 per cent of the candidates being placed as part of Short Term Training are women. The percentage of those who have been certified among those trained – nearly 80 per cent – is also very impressive. One key area where there is scope for improvement is with respect to the placement rate, which is currently at 54 per cent. Considering that an overwhelming proportion of youth being trained belong to the low-income and vulnerable groups, scaling up the placement rate is vital to strengthen

all these schemes. Reinforcing linkages with industries operating near RPL centres and directing those certified to designated centres under the National Career Service for job search assistance are modalities to scale up the placement rates.

National Career Service: Technology Enabled Employment Service

An efficient national employment network is a major prerequisite for facilitating job search, particularly among young and new jobseekers, and also for improving the labour market outcomes. In India, the National Employment Service (NES) since Independence has been operationalised mainly as a public employment service maintained by the government and in conformity with the requirements of the ILO Convention No. 88 (Employment Service Condition, 1948), which has been ratified by India. The NES comprised a network of employment exchanges managed by the state governments and the policies laid down by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India.

Several reports and studies evaluating the performance of employment exchanges during the period 1960-2014 identified a host of problems: geographical jurisdiction for registrants, very low usage of ICT in their operation, operation being confined to mainly government jobs, and an inherent urban bias in placement (Abraham & Sasikumar, 2018). Consequently, jobseekers and employers remained unsatisfied both in terms of types of jobs offered by employers and types of candidates provided for jobs posted, leading to information asymmetry.

It is with the objective of overcoming these limitations and making employment exchanges more vibrant and technology-centred that the Government of India launched the National Career Service (NCS) in 2015. NCS is designed to bridge the gap between jobseekers and job providers, candidates seeking training/career guidance and agencies providing training/career counselling by transforming the National Employment Service. It brings together all stakeholders—jobseekers, employers, counsellors, trainers and private placement agencies—to facilitate the convergence of information and create synergies through relevant partnerships. NCS therefore repositions the existing 997 employment exchanges in India as the hub of career-related services in the shape of Career Centres.

The NCS is a ground-breaking initiative to consolidate and provide a platform for the diverse workforce, employers, placement agencies, career counsellors, community organisations, etc. to interact with each

other in order to meet their requirements in terms of employment. It focuses on easily accessible skill development tools and matching jobs to prospective candidates via the centralised NCS portal. This ICT-based portal (www.ncs.gov.in), operationalised since 2015, has been designed to overcome the inadequacies in the existing NES set-up to connect employment opportunities with the aspirations of youth and facilitate the registration of jobseekers, job providers, skill providers, career counsellors, etc. The NCS services are also available through a mobile app.

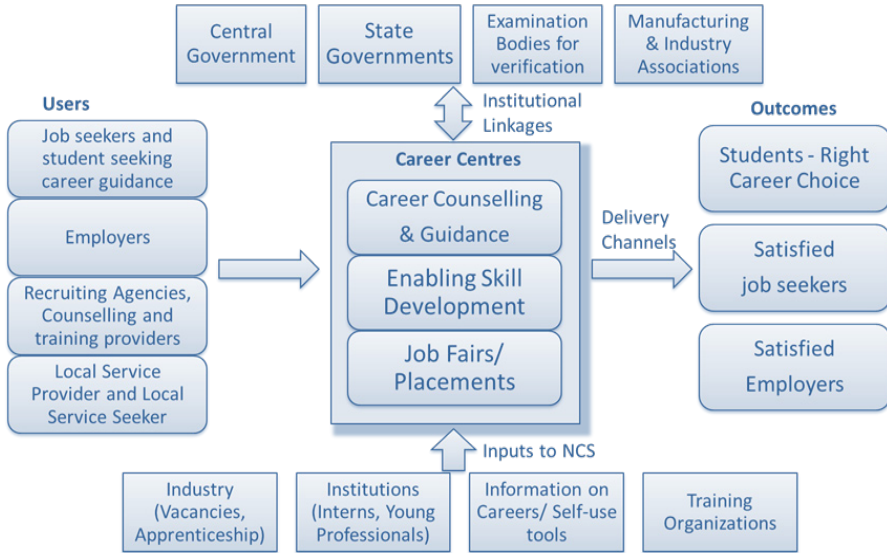
The main objectives of the NCS programme are: (i) easy accessibility of employment services to all stakeholders; (ii) enhanced employability of the workforce by giving them information on training and skilling programmes, connecting them with training institutions, and providing them career counselling services; (iii) provision of employment counselling, assessment of capabilities and vocational guidance services to jobseekers in improving their employability; (iv) comprehensive information related to jobs, job market, job profiles, career paths and employers at a single point; (v) assistance to the workforce in their career planning by providing self-help assessment tools; and (vi) improved interface with industry and employers through regular interactions, which would help to estimate job demand and furnish feedback regarding emerging work streams.

Figure 12 portrays the basic structure of NCS to define the users, inputs, linkages and outcomes of the programme. This architecture is dynamic and is subject to change with the inclusion of more stakeholders going forward.

The operation of the portal is envisaged to adhere to clear quantifiable metrics with respect to aspects such as interoperability and stakeholder integration; interfacing with other systems – state employment exchanges, university databases, digital lockers, etc.; performance; availability; security; and standards, protocols, guidelines and policies.

The NCS architecture represents a working model for the NCS portal and displays all stakeholders, channels of delivery, sources of all transactions, and expected outcomes. The NCS universe is quite wide and inclusive, encompassing all prospective jobseekers, students, employers, placement organisations, counsellors and local service providers. All categories of users can register on the portal and avail of the user-specific services free of cost as mandated by the Government of India.

Figure 12: Structure of the NCS



NCS Portal + Career Centres

As illustrated in the architecture, the primary mode of delivery of employment services is the NCS Portal backed by a country-wide existing network of employment exchanges which are being transformed into Career Centres. The Career Centres would provide basic registration and other value-added services like counselling, assessment tests, profiling, etc. They would also be the key initiators and enablers for conducting job fairs and employment drives in coordination with industry and academia.

Institutional linkages are seen as playing a major role in the success of the NCS. This is a joint effort by the central government and state governments in terms of policy design, enforcement of policy and guidelines, and operationalisation of the NCS ecosystem and scheme execution. Industry associations play a vital role, right from providing consultation to engaging member companies and spreading awareness of the scheme. A central thrust is partnerships with organisations actively engaged in the areas of employment generation and skill development to provide better opportunities to jobseekers in terms of both quantum and quality.

The key outcomes envisaged under the NCS scheme are: (i) enhanced career and employment opportunities; (ii) counselling and guidance for

career development; (iii) improved quality of workforce; (iv) higher female labour force participation; (v) upsurge in entrepreneurial endeavours; and (vi) boost in re-employment opportunities for returning and retired workforce.

This programme strives to connect the aspirations of jobseekers through a wide gamut of facilities and services, to not only cater to their employment needs but also help them make informed career decisions.

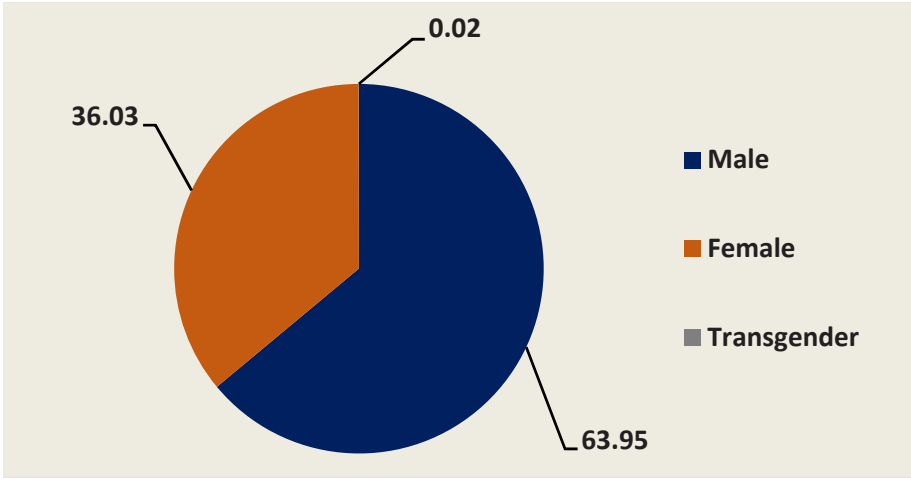
Table 18 provides the year-wise registration of jobseekers on the NCS portal. During 2015-2016 to 2018-2019, more than 10 million job seekers have been registered with NCS portal with nearly 2/3rd (64 per cent) of those registered being males (Fig 13). Although the NCS portal is open to people of all age groups, it is quite evident that an overwhelming proportion (83 per cent) of those who have registered are youth belonging to the age cohort 15-34 years (Fig 14). The educational profiles of those registered indicate that people belonging to all levels of educational attainment (including those without any formal educational qualifications) are making use of the NCS portal (Fig 15). That way, the portal is definitely playing an important role in facilitating job search assistance for youth belonging to different categories, including the vulnerable ones. However, it is evident that people with relatively higher levels of educational attainment (i.e. above matriculation) account for nearly 2/3rd of those registered with the NCS portal. Considering that both the unemployment rate and NEET rate are reported to be high among those with higher educational attainment, providing appropriate job search assistance and counselling to the educated youth will be vital to improve the linkages between educational attainments and labour market outcomes.

Table 18: Registration in National Career Service Portal: 2015-16 to 2018-19

Years	Total Registration
2015-16	3,234,935
2016-17	1,242,414
2017-18	1,924,844
2018-19	4,357,990
Total	10,760,183

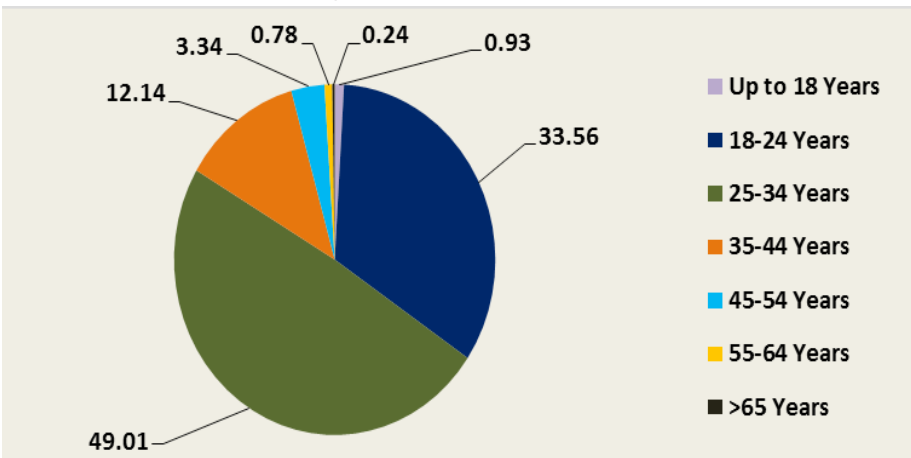
Source: <https://www.ncs.gov.in>

Figure 13: Active Jobseeker Registration in NCS Portal across Gender: 2015-16 to 2018-19



Source: <https://www.ncs.gov.in>

Figure 14: Active Jobseeker Registration in NCS Portal across Age Groups: 2015-16 to 2018-19

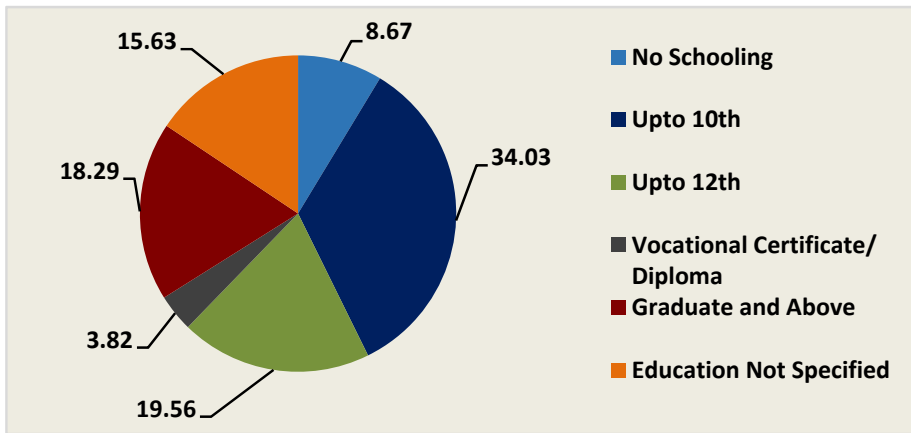


Source: <https://www.ncs.gov.in>

The significance of the role of the NCS in tackling unemployment among youth in India can be gauged from the fact that nearly 72 per cent of those registered are unemployed. Although the NCS portal provides valuable information about the registration of the jobseekers and their important characteristics, presently it does not provide any information pertaining to those who have received employment subsequent to registering on the portal. Discussions with NCS authorities reveal that although the portal

requests registered members who subsequently obtain employment to report it on the portal, a large percentage of those who do get placements do not report back their employed status. To encourage employers to notify recruitment made through NCS, the system has recently introduced an innovative feature of branding of employers on the home page of the portal.

Figure 15: Active Jobseekers – Education Wise: 2015-16 to 2018-19



Source: <https://www.ncs.gov.in>

A core component of the NCS is the Model Career Centres (MCCs) developed in different parts of the country. An MCC is a hub of career-related services with appropriate infrastructure and linkages to provide counselling, allow registration on the NCS portal, and conduct job fairs and assessment. The MCC strategy aims to standardise services offered across the board. MCCs are responsible for all activities related to the NCS, such as industry interaction, candidate engagement, job and skill mapping, and IEC activities. Currently 99 MCCs are operating in different parts of the country.

MCCs organise job fairs on a regular basis. Such job fairs are considered a major means to bridge the gap between employers and jobseekers by supplying a common platform for information sharing, giving jobseekers the opportunity to learn more about potential employers, and providing employers access to a larger pool of qualified manpower to tap into.

Table 19 presents the total number of job fairs organised by MCCs during the period November 2015 to May 2019. It is evident that the MCCs are organising a large number of job fairs and therefore bringing together a substantial number of employers and jobseekers.

It is encouraging that the MCCs obtain data of job placements arising out of these job fairs. The numbers suggest that nearly 19 per cent of those who participate in the job fairs receive final placements. Given that employers, particularly small employers, prefer to employ staff based on personal interviews, organising such job fairs in large numbers is critical in improving the job prospects of the country's youth.

The NCS portal offers case studies of those who have availed of the facilities of NCS registration and participated in job fairs to obtain employment. More success stories can serve as a good incentive for unemployed youth to utilise the counselling and job search services provided by NCS.

**Table 19: Job Fairs Organised by Model Career Centres:
November 2015 to May 2019**

	No. of Job Fairs
No. of Job Fairs	2,971
No. of Employers who participated	25,375
No. of vacancies	1,445,642
No. of jobseekers who participated	1,747,461
No. of candidates shortlisted for next round	667,039
No. of candidates given final offer letter	319,388

Source: <https://www.ncs.gov.in>

Box 2 : Young Professionals of the NCS

As an innovative attempt to involve the youth in the nation-building process, the Ministry of Labour and Employment launched the National Career Service-Young Professional Programme in 2015. Under this programme, the NCS is building a strong and dedicated network of young professionals (YPs) to work towards its objectives throughout the country. These are highly qualified, motivated and forward-thinking individuals who are responsible for driving, achieving and sustaining the objectives of the NCS. These professionals are trained in various disciplines ranging from management studies, social work, human resource management, counselling and psychology, public relations and public administration. They also belong to various states and cultures, which enables the NCS programme to be more inclusive and comprehensive, both in policy and practice.

These young social leaders are utilising their knowledge, energy and innovative thinking to transform the emerging landscape of employment services and career counselling in India. Under this programme, each MCC is allocated one YP who is on-site for a span of three years. These YPs work closely with state officials to facilitate the technology-oriented transition of the NES into the NCS. Along with closely overseeing state-central government coordination, these professionals are also sensitising other stakeholders such as jobseekers, employers, private placement agencies, counsellors and private placement agencies about the NCS. Currently, there are 76 YPs anchoring the NCS programme across the country.

Young professionals are responsible for:

- Facilitating the transition of employment exchanges into career centres by actively engaging in capacity building, branding and training on the NCS project
- Coordinating between the central government and various state governments and institutions for smooth implementation of this national programme across various states and union territories
- Preparing regular reports on performance indicators of the MCC and NCS programmes in their area
- Identifying best practices and bottlenecks in implementing different schemes in collaboration with the NCS project
- Coordinating outreach activities in schools/colleges and conducting job fairs, including interaction with academia, local industry, manufacturing associations, training providers, counsellors and others
- Planning, organising, developing and implementing career events and publications to publicise career centre services, resources and speaker programmes
- Maintaining lists and bulletins concerning jobs and mapping the required skills with the resource pool
- Providing information concerning industry job trends across the country and assistance in the enhancement of the skills in a candidate
- Conducting research and market analysis to create intelligence for better performance of the MCCs, ensuring their efficient and effective functioning

The NCS has been an innovative initiative in the field of public employment services. It has not only leveraged technology but has also created a common platform for all stakeholders to come together and work in tandem. The NCS has massive potential to pursue more

collaborations to develop a robust mechanism to generate all possible employment-related information and disseminate it effectively. With such a rich reservoir of information, NCS can synthesise it to draw insightful policy recommendations. Some of the major areas the NCS is envisaged to focus on in future are discussed below:

Bridging the demand-supply gap by reducing information asymmetry: The NCS with its huge information base on various stakeholders in the employment market can easily analyse it and evaluate the employment trends for better policy planning. The labour market information captured through job postings, job requirements or jobseekers' profiles are valuable inputs to generate astute insights about the demand and supply trends in the employment market. Such insights about the dynamics in the job market can also be plugged into the curriculum development of skill development institutions, leading to equilibrium between demand and supply in the employment market.

Convergence of national schemes: The Government of India is endeavouring to build a robust economy that will not only generate employment opportunities but will also enable India to become a front runner in the global economy. Hence, the government has embarked upon multi-pronged initiatives—Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, Standup India and Start-up India—which aim to transform the Indian economy and empower its citizens. While these initiatives have been at work towards building the nation across different spheres, the NCS is where it all converges. From having a dedicated page for Stand-up and Start-up India to promoting skill development through enlisting skill providers across the country or digitising the overall working of employment exchanges, the NCS portal has been designed to become the meeting point for all these government programmes.

Database integration at the national level: Digitisation of records in public and private domains creates a great opportunity for creating a framework to integrate such databases. The NCS should work in the area of collaborating with databases of educational bodies, universities and examination bodies, which would help in creating an easy platform for sharing candidate-related information and verification of details.

Employment information dissemination: The NCS has large verified national database of jobseekers and employers, and a diverse pool of job vacancies. This creates opportunities for building models for employment market information analysis wherein the information related to available jobs, future vacancies and other relevant information can be provided to users and the general public.

Creating international job convergence: In the age of globalisation and cross-border transfer of human capital, it is of utmost importance that the NCS works towards developing an international jobs corner for Indian citizens; this will provide them a platform to access information about such opportunities along with rules and procedures to be followed while migrating to international destinations for work opportunities. In addition to this, appropriate information should be provided to international candidates/NRIs seeking work opportunities in India.

Counselling-based predictive career path for jobseekers: A way forward for the NCS to help jobseekers find appropriate careers is the use of high-level predictive analytics. The cognitive model works on the basis of input-output wherein inputs related to jobseeker education, work experience and acquired skill set are fed in, and a highly cognitive score based on continuous learning produces output. The output is not limited to appropriate career paths; it also provides information on which skill set to acquire to be successfully correlated to the predicted career path.

Ensure last mile outreach to career seekers: With the advent of digital initiatives, technology has become the main enabler of access to quality education, healthcare and financial services in empowering people in non-urban areas. The NCS platform is a core technology solution riding high on the surge in the adoption of technology across the nation, and seeks to deliver easy and efficient employment service with a click. With the increased rate of mobile usage across geographies and age groups, an app-based service has become a necessity.

Promoting Apprenticeship: Recent Initiatives

Apprenticeship training is one of the most effective means to scale up the employability of young job seekers. Apprenticeships provide key training while allowing trainees to earn while they learn. It delivers an optimum balance between theory and hands-on experience. In addition to acquiring hands-on skill, apprenticeship also allows trainees to acquire knowledge about various rules and processes of industries, safety systems, and team work. Such combination of skills helps young trainees to gain the requisite confidence to perform effectively in working environment. That way, apprenticeship is a proven solution for training and retaining talent which is industry ready.

In recognition of the significance of apprenticeship as a key pathway to improve labour market outcomes of youth, Government of India has introduced significant reforms in regulation and policies related to

apprenticeship to promote expansion of apprenticeship India both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Comprehensive amendments were made to the Apprentices Act, 1961 to make it more attractive for both industry and youth. Major changes introduced in the amendment include: replacing the restrictive system of trade wise and unit wise regulation of apprentices with a band of 2.5% to 10% of the total workforce, introduction of optional trades, bringing in the service sector under the ambit of apprenticeship and allowing industries to out-source basic training.

As per the amended Apprentices Act, 1961, all the establishments having work force (regular and contract employees) of 40 or more are mandated to engage apprentices undertake Apprenticeship Programmes in a range from 2.5%-10% of their workforce (including contractual employees) every year. For establishments having a workforce between 6 & 40, engagement of apprentices is optional and establishments have a workforce of 5 or less are not permitted to engage apprentices.

Rates of stipend payable per month to the trade apprentices was also enhanced in 2014 as follows:

First Year	70% of minimum wage of semi-skilled workers notified by the respective State or Union Territory
Second Year	80% of minimum wage of semi-skilled workers notified by the respective State or Union Territory
Third and Fourth Year	90% of minimum wage of semi-skilled workers notified by the respective State or Union territory

The Government of India launched the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) in August 2016 with the objective of promoting apprenticeship training, incentivising employers who wish to engage apprentices and increasing the engagement of apprentices from 2.4 lakh in 2016 to nearly 50 lakh by 2020. The NAPS operates through following incentives: i) To support establishments, specially the SMEs, to engage apprentices under the Apprentice Act and reimburse stipend to them as per prescribed rates -under NAPS i.e. 25% of prescribed stipend subject to a maximum of Rs. 1500/- per month per apprentice is reimbursed to such establishments by the Government of India to engage apprentices ; and ii) To support the establishments, (specially the SMEs), who do not have

in house Basic Training Facilities to set up such facilities in house or at a centre outside its premises or to engage Training Partners to undertake the Basic Training activity on their behalf for fresher apprentices who need to undergo such Basic Training before joining the shop floor (on the job) Training under the Apprenticeship Programme. Basic training cost up to a limit of Rs. 7500/- per apprentice for a maximum of 500 hours/3 months) is reimbursed to the Basic Training Provider engaged by them under NAPS by the Government of India.

An apprenticeship portal (apprenticeshipindia.org) has been specially developed to execute apprenticeship programme digitally. The portal facilitates the registration of establishments/candidates, generation of contracts and reimbursements under NAPS. The portal provides the following facilities for the major stakeholders.

Industry: Online registration; Online posting of apprenticeship opportunities; Online uploading of course curriculum; Search & shortlisting of candidates' specific to sector, trades, region, etc.; Issue offer letters to candidates for engaging as apprentices; Submit contract of apprenticeship on-line for approval by the concerned authority; Monitoring of apprenticeship training; On-line submission of returns and records; On-line submission of claims under NAPS; and Online reimbursement of Government share under NAPS.

Candidates: On-line registration indicating their preferred sector/trades of choice; Sending application to potential employers for apprenticeship training; Online receipt and acceptance of offer letters from establishments; Process all necessary contractual obligations online; and Posting preferred apprenticeship opportunities, place of Basic Training, Basic Training Provider (BTP) specific to sector, trades and region.

Basic Training Provider (BTP): Online registration; Posting basic training seats/vacancies; Search & shortlist candidates specific to sector, trades, region etc. for Basic Training; Provide basic training to apprentices who have been sponsored by an employer/establishment after execution of contract with apprentice; Placement of apprentices for on-the-job training with employer after basic training; and Online submission of claims for reimbursement of Basic Training costs with appropriate authorities.

These interventions are transforming the apprenticeship training in India into a very dynamic and technology centered system. This is expected to considerably scale up the employability and labour market outcomes of the youth.

Key Highlights of the Section

- Major and innovative policy interventions initiated in India during 2014-2019 to improve the access of youth to decent and productive employment and expand livelihood options.
- National Youth Policy, 2014 seeks to define a vision for the youth of the country. The policy accords top priority to skill development, employment and entrepreneurship.
- National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015 sets the framework for skilling at a massive scale with speed, standard (quality) and sustainability.
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) (2016-2020) enabling a large number of youth to acquire industry-relevant skill training. Most importantly, individuals with prior learning experience or skills assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- PMKVY has made impressive progress with 60-65 per cent of the target of skilling 10 million youth achieved already. An overwhelming proportion of those trained have been certified. There is potential to scale up the placement rate, which is currently at 55%.
- National Career Service (NCS), a ground breaking initiative to evolve a more efficient and inclusive employment service in India, operationalises a technology enabled platform to guide the youth in informed career paths.
- NCS Portal with a registration of over 10 million performing a pivotal role in job search assistance.
- Significant measures initiated to scale up apprenticeship system in India both in quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Some of the major initiatives include: Amendment in Apprenticeship Act, 1961 to make it more attractive for both industry and youth; launching of the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme; and operationalisation of an apprenticeship portal.

Section 5

Policy Perspectives

This section highlights some key possible strategies to promote youth employment, particularly in the context of ongoing rapid technological transformations and the evolving future of work, and to situate youth at the centre of development processes.

Creating appropriate and remunerative employment and income-earning opportunities for youth who form a sizeable proportion of the population and labour force can be a catalyst to boost effective demand in the economy, stimulate investment and achieve sustainable economic growth. Promoting youth employment is critical from the perspective of tackling the high unemployment rates and NEET rates prevailing among different segments of youth in the country and also to meet the aspirations of the increasingly educated youth. Effective youth employment strategies are also pivotal for reducing the gender differentials in the labour market, especially in terms of tackling low participation rates and high unemployment rates among women. Innovative measures are also necessary to transition an overwhelming proportion of youth engaged in informal employment to formal work and social security arrangements. One of the greatest challenges in India is to scale up, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, the skill base of India's youth. Concurrently, there is also a pertinent need to equip the youth with relevant skill sets to enhance their employability and reap the opportunities created by technological advancements. Given that access to technology is widening in India, appropriate use of technology and the digital tools will be vital for improving the core aspects of youth employment, such as extending public employment services, expanding entrepreneurial development among youth, developing learning resources for young workers, and evolving green infrastructure and jobs.

We identify the following core pathways to promote a better future of work for youth: employment-centred macroeconomic and sectoral policies; reorientation of the skill ecosystem; innovative use of technology and digital tools; re-regulation of the labour regulation systems; and an improved labour market information system, particularly with respect to new forms of employment.

Employment-centred Macroeconomic and Sectoral Policies

With long-term decline in employment elasticities, the focus of India's macroeconomic policy should be on the demand side. It is important to consider the ongoing global slowdown and its possible repercussions on India's growth while re-strategising macroeconomic and sectoral policies.

From the perspective of creating more job opportunities, policies should lay increased emphasis on labour-intensive industries like food processing, leather and footwear, apparel and garments. One of the problems of the labour-intensive sectors, particularly apparel and garments, is that most of the firms are small, have not grown over time, and hence operate at low productivity levels. In fact, as noted in this report, this is one of the major characteristics of manufacturing firms in India. There is a critical need to incentivise small firms to grow into medium or large firms, with the focus being on new firms rather than old. Similarly, priority lending should be provided to young firms in high employment elastic sectors.

Given that agriculture continues to be a dominant source of employment, there is a need to concentrate on rural economic diversification and thus facilitate productive structural transformation. Focusing on productivity growth through adoption of new and cost-effective technologies in sectors like food processing, storage and distribution will be pivotal in facilitating rural economic diversification.

So far as tackling economic slowdown is concerned, the policy interventions could comprise a host of counter-cyclical measures, including sectoral incentives like goods and service tax (GST) relief to sectors like automobiles to boost effective demand, and confidence-building steps for the private sector in order to step up investment. Given that export potential is declining due to deepening trade wars and the global slowdown, and the fact that the exports played a major role in the upsurge of India's economic growth in the last two decades, there is a need to recalibrate trade policies. One possible strategy to be considered is import substitution, particularly in relation to non-petroleum imports. Attractive incentives should be provided to domestic and foreign firms to invest in such import substitution endeavours, which in turn will pave the way for more employment avenues.

Reorientation of the Skill Ecosystem

Expanding the skill base of the economy, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, should be accorded the topmost priority. Given the

rapid technological advancements and the shifting nature of demand for skills, the overall skill ecosystem needs reorientation to equip it to respond to the challenges of change. Most importantly, the skill ecosystem must move towards a lifelong learning system with a focus on problem-solving skills (to aid critical and analytical thinking), learning skills (to enable acquisition of new knowledge), and social skills (for promoting collaborations and teamwork). The curriculum of the skill development centres should always include a judicious combination of technological and problem-solving skills. Strong emphasis must be placed on 'on-the-job training'. Workers, particularly young workers, should be incentivised for skill acquisition. Firms should also be provided subsidies to skill workers.

Although the amendments to the Apprenticeship Act in 2014 has created an enabling environment for the growth of young apprentices in India, there is a need to promote quality apprenticeship as a strategy to skill youth and enhance their employability. Assessments of successful apprenticeship systems around the world indicate that a dual system that combines work- and school-based learning may be ideal for transitioning to full-time employment. One of the fundamental strengths of this approach is the high degree of encouragement and ownership by employers.

Innovative Use of Technology and Digital Tools

Innovative use of technology can significantly improve the labour market outcomes of the youth. It is quite clear from the operation of certain active labour market policies in India (such as the NCS) that technology-enabled systems enhance efficiency and outreach. We need to use technology particularly to formalise informal employment. There is also a strong need to make young workers an integral part of innovation and technology plans.

Advances in technology also need to be used to assist young workers for newer employment opportunities. Micro technology should be promoted to improve the income-earning potential of young persons in micro and small-scale enterprises. Digital platforms should be developed to offer young workers a virtual space for information sharing and grievance redressal. Considering that labour force participation rates among young women are lower and unemployment among those who enter the labour force is higher, customised mobile apps should be developed to provide on line counselling and job search assistance to young women.

There is tremendous scope to improve the competencies of the young workers and firms through innovative use of digital tools. Organising Massive Open Online Courses on themes related to youth employment are critical not only to provide a nuanced understanding of how to respond to the emerging challenges but also as a method to situate youth at the centre of the development policy discourse.

Research from different parts of the world shows that firms using Artificial Intelligence achieve high levels of efficiency and create market concentration. Therefore basic AI tools need to be provided in the form of open source, particularly to young entrepreneurs.

Re-regulating Labour Regulations

From the perspective of re-regulating labour regulations, what is of utmost significance is the universalisation of social protection. Given that a large proportion of young workers are still engaged in informal employment, the provision of basic social security needs is important not only from the perspective of addressing the insecurities but also as a method to formalise informal employment. Another critical issue to be tackled is dealing with ambiguities related to the categorisation of employment status of workers engaged in the platform economy.

Improved Labour Market Information System

Although new forms of employment in a sharing economy are expanding, we still lack appropriate national-level information regarding the key labour market outcomes associated with such work. There is a need to have customised national-level labour market surveys to generate the requisite information towards relevant policy formulation. Most of the existing estimations on automation and its impact on employment are at the macro level. However, for evolving more informed interventions, we need more firm-level evidences, particularly the conditions in which automation of jobs is likely to occur.

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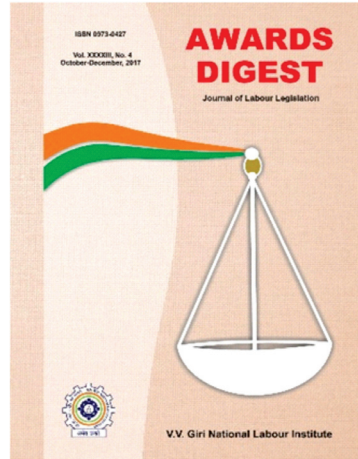
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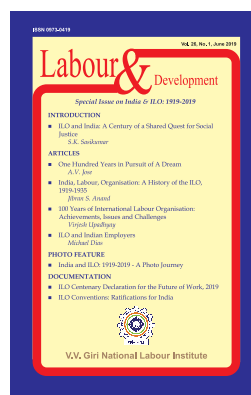
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