Supriya RoyChowdhury
Carol Upadhya

India's Changing Cityscapes: Work, Migration and Livelihoods

Institute for Social and Economic Change
Bengaluru, India

National Institute of Advanced Studies
Bengaluru, India

Project Report

NIAS/SSc/UMS/U/RR/01/2020
CPIGD 55

India's Changing Cityscapes: Work, Migration and Livelihoods

ISEC - NIAS Collaborative Research Programme,
funded by Indian Council of Social Science Research

Co-directors:

Supriya RoyChowdhury (Institute for Social and Economic Change)

Carol Upadhya (National Institute of Advanced Studies)

Research team:

Prajwal Nagesh (Research Associate)

Vishaka Warrier (Research Associate)

Harpreet Kaur (Research Associate)

Pragati Tiwari (Research Associate)

Sazana Jayadeva (Postdoctoral Associate, former)

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE
Bengaluru, India

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
Bengaluru, India

Copyright ISEC and NIAS, 2020

Published by
Institute for Social and Economic Change
Dr. V K R V Rao Road
Nagarabhavi Post
Bangalore – 560 072
Tel: (080) 2321 5468 Fax: 23217008
E-mail: admn@isec.ac.in

National Institute of Advanced Studies
Indian Institute of Science Campus
Bengaluru - 560 012
Tel: 2218 5000, Fax: 2218 5028
E-mail: publications@nias.res.in

NIAS Report: NIAS/SSc/UMS/U/RR/01/2020
ISEC Report: CPIGD 55

Cover photo: From authors' fieldwork in Bangalore

Executive Summary

India's economic liberalization programme produced high rates of economic growth, yet the structural transformation of the Indian economy has been relatively slow. Although the share of agriculture in GDP has steadily declined, the largest number of workers in India are still employed in agriculture and other rural occupations. The reasons for this situation are complex, but one aspect of the problem is the restructuring of the urban economy in which manufacturing has been overtaken by services. While the dominant development discourse equates economic development with urbanization and industrialization, the economic trajectory of Indian cities challenges this model.

India's cities have witnessed the expansion of the 'new service economy' – most notably high-skilled industries such as software outsourcing but also low-skilled sectors such as hospitality, big retail, security services and transportation. As this consumption-oriented economy expands – through the proliferation of shopping malls, exclusive hotels and restaurants, spas and beauty parlours, and fleets of cars and taxis serving middle-class urban commuters – new employment opportunities have been created for people with a range of educational levels and skills. Despite their diversity, these new jobs have certain features in common – precarity, instability and informal employment conditions – although they are located in 'formal sector' organizations. The labour market for these new forms of service work is increasingly organized through private employment and training agencies, which have professionalized the recruitment and training of service workers.

It is within this larger context of 'jobless growth' that the crisis of unemployment – and especially of educated unemployment – has become a major area of concern and policy initiatives, in particular the 'Skill India' policy. Skill India, as policy and discourse, has attempted to bridge the gap between two the domains of joblessness and lack of skills by promoting short-term skill training programmes imparted mainly by private partners, marking an important shift from the earlier pattern of vocational education. The multiplication of policies and programmes at the central and state levels have generated a new set of institutions, agencies and processes, aimed particularly at underprivileged youth. This 'ecosystem' of institutions – skill commissions, industry-led Sector Skill Councils, diverse funding programmes and skilling frameworks – promotes skill training through a large number of private institutions, run mainly by private companies and NGOs drawing on corporate as well as government funding. This policy approach has created a difficult set of problems and contradictions, which are highlighted by our study.

The increasing importance of services, combined with the crisis in agriculture in many regions, rural unemployment, and rising levels of education as well as aspirations, have engendered new pathways and modalities of mobility, as potential workers flow into the city from rural areas and small

towns in search of jobs. However, several economists have questioned whether the service sector can provide sufficient employment for India's youth, given that the growth of employment in services has not kept pace with its share in GDP. This study, by mapping the intersections between migration, skilling and changing patterns of employment in cities, is located within these debates on development and employment in post-liberalization India.

The research presented in this report has explored how the changing urban economic and occupational structure has reshaped patterns of migration, work, livelihoods, aspirations and the possibilities of economic and social mobility. Based on extensive field research in Bangalore and Raichur district, Karnataka, we argue that training centres are playing a significant role in the production of this new workforce. We find that their mandate is not only to contribute to the national effort to make youth 'employable', but also to produce workers who are fit for the evolving urban service economy – a space that is defined as 'formal sector' (in the sense of organized or corporatized services) yet is marked by informalization of work and employment conditions. Within this large domain, our study focused particularly on the beauty & wellness, bit retail and transportation sectors.

Insofar as a central thrust of many skill training programmes is to incorporate rural youth into urban employment as a means of poverty alleviation, rural-urban migration is central to the ideas of progress and social mobility that are embedded in the new skills script. But this study demonstrates that the migration process is much more complex than what many actors in the skill universe imagine: the fragility of life and livelihood within the framework of informal work defines the parameters within which youth may aspire to move to cities and seek urban jobs, but often they are compelled to turn back due to the paucity of decent and well-paid work as well as high cost of sustaining themselves in the city on the salaries that are available. Moreover, we found that while training institutions play a significant role in shaping the aspirations of educated rural youth for migration, mentoring or hand-holding mechanisms that could facilitate their transition into the urban service workforce are ill-designed and often dysfunctional.

The study suggests that skill training has to a large extent become a numbers game, wherein training centres are required to produce the requisite quantum of graduates and placements to meet the requirements of their funders (government agencies or corporate social responsibility initiatives). However, there is little effort on the part of sponsors, the state or the institutions themselves to determine the effectiveness of the training in producing sustainable employment, to follow the trajectory of vulnerable trainees once they are released into the urban services job market, or more broadly to understand the impact of skill training on the lives of these youth. This disconnect between the aims of skill training programmes and the reality of youth aspirations and the urban job market revealed itself in different ways. In Raichur, for example, several training centres were engaged in

imparting skills like tailoring and sales management in a place where there are no garment factories in which tailors could be employed and no malls offering retail jobs. This shows that a local employment market analysis, which should be a prerequisite for designing skill training programmes, had not been undertaken. In Bangalore, we found that most of the graduates of the training programmes we studied had left the jobs where they had been placed within a few weeks or months, suggesting that skill training did not actually lead to stable urban employment.

Training, however valuable, did not prepare the trainees for the realities of the urban lower-end services job market – labour surplus, unregulated and insecure work, and near-absence of labour rights or possibility of collective action. The precarity and informality of work in this domain generates multiple vulnerabilities for workers in the sectors that we studied. Low wages and uncertain tenure create a context where workers are encouraged to move quickly from one job to another, and one place to another, in search of a pay hike of even a few hundred rupees or less onerous working conditions. Often, when they become disappointed with the available opportunities or find it difficult to save money to send home (the main purpose of migrating for work in the first place), they return to their hometowns or villages where they may take up odd jobs, go back to always available construction work, resume their education, or just remain idle.

Finally, the study indicates that the Skill India policy itself is not sufficiently anchored in the reality of India's political economy. The preponderance of informal employment within the 'organized' service economy makes the future of the skilled and semi-educated service sector employee almost as bleak as that of the unskilled construction or informal economy worker. While greater attention to the relevance of skills to local job markets would certainly make skill training more useful for workers, there is also a need for more focused and critical attention to the kinds of jobs that are available and the institutional and policy framework of urban service work.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to their respective institutions, the Institute for Social and Economic Change and the National Institute of Advanced Studies, for supporting this collaborative study. We gratefully acknowledge the support of ICSSR for the project, as well as the valuable inputs of our Advisory Committee – Prof. R.S. Deshpande, Prof. Manoj Panda, and Prof. Ravinder Kaur. We especially thank the members of our research team, Prajwal, Vishaka, Harpreet and Pragati, for their dedicated and creative work on this project. Needless to say, the fieldwork could not have happened without them. We are also very grateful to Sazana, who coordinated everything and contributed to our thinking at an early stage.

Supriya would like to thank Prof B.P. Vani of ISEC for her support during the period of the project. Carol is particularly grateful to Mr. Srinivasa Aithal, Head Administration, for his always efficient help in all matters administrative and financial, and to Ms. Hamsa Kalyani, Librarian, NIAS for her cheerful cooperation in searching out research materials.

Finally, we are very grateful to all the organizations and individuals who agreed to participate in the study, most of whom must remain nameless to protect their confidentiality. We hope that the study will make some contribution to their work and lives.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary i
Acknowledgements iv
List of Tables vii
List of Figures ix

1. Introduction 1
   1.1. Objectives and scope 2
   1.2. Methodology and research sites 3
   1.3. Structure of the report 4
2. Background: Rise of Service Sector, Employment Crisis, and Skill Development Policies 6
   2.1. Structural change in the Indian economy 6
      2.1.1. The unemployment crisis 8
      2.1.2. Work and employment in the new service economy 9
   2.2. 'Skill India' – discourse and practice 10
      2.2.1. The ideology of skill development 12
      2.2.2. Skill policies and programmes - critical assessments 14
3. Karnataka and Bangalore- Economic Development, Migration and Employment 18
   3.1. Political economy of the state: broad overview 18
   3.2. Regional disparities 20
   3.3. Migration in Karnataka and Bangalore 22
      3.3.1. Patterns of migration 23
      3.3.2. Reasons for migration: Insights from Census data 23
      3.3.3. Influx of unskilled and semi-skilled labour: Rural to urban migration 27
   3.4. Bangalore: Economic structure and employment 28
4. Skill Training in Bangalore - Producing Service Workers 30
   4.1. Bangalore's skill training 'ecosystem' 30
   4.2. Skill training organizations in Bangalore - case studies 31
      4.2.1. Philosophy and aims 34
      4.2.2. Organization, management and funding 36
   4.3. Producing service workers 38
      4.3.1. Mobilization and motivation 38
      4.3.2. Course content and training practices 41
   4.4. From training centre to workplace 46
      4.4.1. Expectations and experiences of training 46
      4.4.2. Job placement 52
   4.5. Following mobile workers: Aspirations, anxieties, and attrition 58
      4.5.1. A peripatetic workforce 62
      4.5.2. Sociality at work 66
   4.6. Conclusion: What do skill training organizations actually do? 68
5. Social Profile of New Service Workers 70
   5.1. Gender and age 70

5.2. Place of origin and migration 72
5.3. Socio-economic status of households 74
5.4. Caste and community 80
5.5. Education and work experience 82
5.6. Conclusion 84
6. Raichur - Political Economy, Employment and Migration 85
6.1. Political economy of Raichur- an overview 85
6.1.1. Demography 85
6.1.2. Agriculture 86
6.1.3. Industry and employment 86
6.1.4. Poverty 86
6.1.5. Gender Inequality Index 87
6.1.6. Education and literacy 89
6.1.7. Migration 90
6.2. Skill development in Raichur 92
6.2.1. Skill training centres 92
6.2.2. Aspirations of trainees 94
6.3. Trainees, training and jobs 96
6.4. Conclusion 104
7. Working in Bangalore's New Service Economy – An In-depth Sectoral Exploration 106
7.1. The beauty sector: Migration, skilling and livelihoods 107
7.1.1. Socio-economic profile 109
7.1.2. From training centre to workplace - Skill acquisition and exposure 110
7.1.3. Post-training period: Expectations and reality 112
7.1.4. Case studies of migrant beauty workers 114
7.1.5. Impact on women in the minority community 116
7.1.6. From slums to salons 118
7.1.7. Conclusion - beauty work 119
7.2. Organized retail and unorganized labour 121
7.2.1. Socio-economic profile of retail workers 122
7.2.2. Working in retail: Employment conditions and employee experiences 126
7.2.3. A future in retail? Aspirations and pathways of (im)mobility 134
7.2.4. The retail workforce: Footloose and flexible labour 136
7.2.5. Single women as main earners: Case studies 140
7.2.6. Conclusion - The corporate retail workforce 145
7.3. Drivers: Aspirations, expectations and reality 146
7.3.1. Case study of MoveUp driver trainees 147
7.3.2. Case study of platform drivers 158
7.3.3. Comparative assessment 165
7.4. Conclusion: Labour mobility and precarity 167
8. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations 169
References 174
Appendix: Note on poverty line estimation 179

List of Tables

Section 3. Karnataka and Bangalore: Economic Development, Migration and Employment

Table 3.1: Agriculture's share in GSDP selected years 19
Table 3.2: Share of industry and manufacturing in GSDP in the state of Karnataka 20
Table 3.3: District level income disparity 21
Table 3.4: Urbanization within Karnataka – 2011 22
Table 3.5: Incidence of poverty by divisions in Karnataka 22
Table 3.6: Percentage distribution of all Karnataka migrants stating reasons for migration, 1991 24
Table 3.7: Percentage distribution of all Karnataka migrants stating reasons for migration, 2001 25
Table 3.8: Migrants to Bangalore, 2001 and 2011 26
Table 3.9: Migrants by place of last residence and reasons for migration to Bangalore from within Karnataka 26
Table 3.10: Migrants by place of last residence and reasons for migration to Bangalore from other states 26

Section 4. Skill Training in Bangalore - Producing Service Workers

Table 4.1: Mode of recruitment to training programme 41
Table 4.2: Pragati alumni placement data 53
Table 4.3: Expected location of employment and actual location after training 59
Table 4.4: Expected and actual employment and salary, post-training 60

Section 5. Social Profile of New Service Workers

Table 5.1: Age and gender of trainee cohort, by course 71
Table 5.2: Gender breakup of Pragati alumni 71
Table 5.3: Rural/ urban origin of student cohort, by organization and type of training 73
Table 5.4: Place of origin, by type of course 73
Table 5.5: Mother tongue, by type of course 74
Table 5.6: Pragati alumni - place of origin 74
Table 5.7: Reported monthly household income, by course 77
Table 5.8: Estimated monthly household per capita income, by course 77
Table 5.9: Ownership of land and other assets, by course 78
Table 5.10: Parents' education, by course 78
Table 5.11: Parents' occupation, by course 79
Table 5.12: Caste and community, by course 81
Table 5.13: Pragati alumni - caste and community 81
Table 5.14: Education of students, by course 82
Table 5.15: Prior work experience, by course 83
Table 5.16: Pragati alumni – education 83

Section 6: Raichur - Political Economy, Employment and Migration

Table 6.1: BPL card holders/ Antyodaya scheme beneficiaries in Hyderabad- Karnataka districts 88
Table 6.2: Indicators of GII in Raichur district, 2011-12 88
Table 6.3 Gender Inequality Index (GII) across districts with Dimensional Index Values and Ranking in Karnataka, 2011 89
Table 6.4: Literacy rate (%) in Karnataka state and Raichur district, 2011 89
Table 6.5: DOR in Raichur district, 2011-12 (%). 90
Table 6.6: Per capita income of Raichur respondents 97
Table 6.7: Educational qualifications of Raichur respondents 97
Table 6.8: Occupational details of parents of Raichur respondents 98
Table 6.9: Expected employment and post training employment of Raichur respondents 99
Table 6.10: Location of employment of Raichur respondents 101
Table 6.11: Salary details of Raichur respondents 104

Section 7: Working in Bangalore's New Service Economy

Table 7.1: Place and origin of beauty training cohort 109
Table 7.2: Rural and urban household per capita income of beauty respondents 109
Table 7.3: Occupational details of parents of beauty respondents 110
Table 7.4: Educational qualification and community/caste of beauty respondents 110
Table 7.5: Preferred location for employment, beauty respondents 112
Table 7.6: Details of employment of beauty respondents 113
Table 7.7: Information on provision of contract letter to beauty respondents 114
Table 7.8: Expected salary and post training salary of beauty respondents 114
Table 7.9: Socio economic characteristics of retail respondents 123
Table 7.10: Snapshot of case study of respondents - retail sector 124
Table 7.11: Household per capita income of driver trainees 148
Table 7.12: Previous work experience of driver trainees 149
Table 7.13: Expected employment and actual post- training employment of driving trainees 153
Table 7.14: Location of employment of driver trainee respondents 153
Table 7.15: Salary details of driver trainee respondents 154
Table 7.16: Household per capita income of platform drivers 159
Table 7.17: Occupational details of parents of platform drivers 159
Table 7.18: Educational qualification and community/caste of platform drivers 160
Table 7.19: Previous work experience of platform drivers 160
Table 7.20: Salary details of platform drivers 160
Table 7.21: Aspirations of platform drivers 164

List of Figures

Section 2. Background: Rise of Service Sector, Employment Crisis, and Skill Development Policies

Figure 2.1: Government sponsored job fair in Bangalore, attended by 9000 youth 9
Figure 2.2: Advertisement for PMKVY, at a Bangalore job fair 13
Figure 2.3: PMKVY job fair in Bangalore 13

Section 4. Skill Training in Bangalore- Producing Service Workers

Figure 4.1: Poster for a skill training centre 33
Figure 4.2: Mobilization team in action 39
Figure 4.3: Training in progress 43
Figure 4.4: Job advertisement hoarding at a job fair 58

Section 7. Working in Bangalore's New Service Economy – An In-depth Sectoral Exploration

Figure 7.1: Job advertisement for drivers 155
Figure 7.2: Platform drivers 162

Section 1. Introduction

India's economic liberalization programme produced high rates of economic growth, yet the structural transformation of the Indian economy has been relatively slow. In particular, the share of manufacturing in GDP and in employment remains low, while the tertiary sector has expanded. Despite this dramatic services-led economic growth, policy experts have debated whether the service sector can provide sufficient jobs to address the major problem of employment and absorb the large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers that make up most of the urban workforce. This question is particularly crucial because although the share of agriculture in GDP has steadily declined, the largest number of workers in India are still employed in agriculture and other rural occupations. The reasons for this situation are complex, but one aspect of the problem is the emerging pattern of urban employment in which services have seen the most expansion. Thus, while the traditional development discourse equates economic development with urbanization and industrialization, the economic trajectory of Indian cities challenges this model.

Even as manufacturing jobs have declined, India's cities have witnessed the proliferation of new kinds of jobs in the service sector – most notably high-skilled jobs in the IT and ITES industries, but also in domains such as hospitality, entertainment, retail, transportation, housekeeping, and medical services, which have also created new employment opportunities. Despite their diversity, these myriad new urban occupations appear to have in common certain features, such as precarity, instability, and informal employment conditions – even in 'formal sector' organizations.

These developments in turn have given rise to new patterns of rural-urban, urban-urban, and circular or temporary migration, as workers with a range of skills – from highly educated professionals to retail workers to relatively unskilled construction workers – flow into cities in search of jobs. However, economists have questioned whether the service sector can provide sufficient employment for India's youth, given that the growth of employment in the tertiary sector has not kept pace with the increase in its share of the GDP. It is in this larger context of 'jobless growth' that the crisis of unemployment – and especially of educated unemployment – has become a major area of concern and policy initiatives. The Skill India policy aims to address this problem through short-term skill training programmes, imparted mainly by private partners, marking an important shift from the earlier pattern of vocational education.

This study explores the intersections between migration, skilling and changing patterns of employment in cities, locating itself within debates on development and employment in post-liberalization India. We ask how the changing urban economic and occupational structure has

reshaped patterns of migration, work, livelihoods, aspirations and the possibilities of economic and social mobility.

While much research has been carried out on the urban informal economy as well as several new industries such as IT-ITES, we have relatively few studies of the kinds of work and occupations that have emerged in the urban service economy along with new forms of training and recruitment, employment practices. In addition, the increasing importance of the 'new service economy', in the context of rising aspirations, widespread unemployment and the agrarian crisis, has engendered new pathways and modalities of mobility, as potential workers flow into the city from rural areas and small towns in search of jobs.

The need for new research on the implications of these changes in the urban employment scenario was the motivation for this study, which was carried out by researchers at the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) and the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) in Bangalore between 2017 and 2019. The project, entitled *India's Changing Cityscapes: Work, Migration and Livelihoods* and funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), focused on migration and employment in Bangalore's service economy. Within this large and fast-evolving domain, we selected the beauty & wellness, organized retail and transportation segments for in-depth study.

1.1 Objectives and scope

The overall aim of the study was to investigate the social and economic consequences of the changing urban employment scenario and the implications of these new forms of employment for the economic security, livelihoods and social mobility of workers and their families and communities. To achieve this objective, we examined the connections between skill training, the expansion of low-end services in Bangalore, rural-urban migration, and the economic and social mobility of workers. In particular, our objectives were to:

(a) trace the linkages between the domains of employment, migration, and skilling;

(b) document the institutions and processes through which skills are acquired and recruitment takes place;

(c) map the institutional framework within which urban service work is carried out, in terms of conditions of employment and working conditions;

(d) examine how employment in these sectors affects the life chances of the urban working classes and rural migrants, by examining the structure of wages and employment conditions, occupational mobility, educational opportunities, and social mobility;

(e) understand how workers, particularly migrant workers, access work and employment, the channels of information and networking they use, the relations of debt and patronage that may facilitate their employment, and the social factors that determine who is able to access employment networks and who is excluded.

The following section describes the research strategy and methods employed in the study.

1.2 Methodology and research sites

The study employed two distinct research strategies, each with their own research methods:

A. Skill training organizations as fulcrum of mobility and employment access

Our first major strategy was a longitudinal case study approach, in which we used skill training institutions as the fulcrum for research and to generate a cohort of service sector workers for the study. We selected four institutes that run training programmes aimed at service sector jobs such as in beauty, transport, retail sales, office assistant and back office roles, and auto repair. In each, we documented the aims, management and funding of the organization, their skill training protocols and activities, and their recruitment and job placement processes, and collected data on the social profile of trainees across several batches. We conducted interviews with the founders, managers, trainers and other key personnel of these organizations, observed training sessions, and carried out semi-structured interviews with one batch of students in each selected course. We also observed key events such as student mobilization drives and job (in Bangalore and north Karnataka) and placement processes.

From the same organizations we selected a sub-sample of 5-10 trainees with whom we conducted in-depth interviews during the training period, as well as follow-up interviews after they entered the workforce, for 12 to 18 months. This strategy allowed us to explore in more depth how skill centres work and larger issues with regard to training, job placement and service sector employment, and gave us an in-depth understanding of the social backgrounds of trainees. We were also able to document their experiences of training and work and their strategies of spatial and social mobility. However, in many cases we could not conduct follow-up interviews as students left their jobs and became untraceable -- itself an important finding.

B. Research in Raichur, a key source of urban service workers

Research in Raichur city and three neighbouring villages provided a contrast to the research undertaken in Bangalore, as Raichur is one of the most backward districts in the state as well as a predominantly agricultural economy. We chose Raichur district because many of the migrant

respondents in Bengaluru were from this place. The motive was to not only trace the nature of employment and youth aspirations, but also to understand the socio-economic background of the respondents from the district and the environment from which the skill trainees emerged.

In Raichur we studied training centres located in Raichur city as well as a village called Maski. We took up three villages from where a large number of the Bangalore trainees had come from, to gather information about their families and their social context. We also interviewed around 50 youth of the district who had undergone skill training, either there or in Bangalore. Their different occupational trajectories, as well as patterns of migration, revealed the structure of opportunities and challenges that face rural youth as they turn away from agriculture and look to urban employment.

C. Case studies of employees in selected service industries

The third strategy was designed to delve more deeply into selected sectors of the new service economy and focused on the workplace. The selected sectors were Beauty & Wellness and Retail, but we also carried out a smaller segment of research on platform (Ola) taxi drivers. We interviewed employees of several organizations to understand their work and working conditions and to develop a profile of the workforces in these industries. Although the sample size in this phase of the study was small, we could develop qualitative insights into workers' experiences through in-depth and repeated interviews, with employees as well as managers and employers. In addition to semi-structured interviews with employees, we conducted interviews with HR managers of companies that hired students from our sample training centres, and managers working with other companies, to understand employers' perspectives on the employment situation in these sectors.

D. Other methods and data collected

Other methods included key informant interviews with leaders of other skill centres and other individuals knowledgeable about these sectors and issues. We also compiled an archive of press clippings, reports and other material relevant to skill training and service sector employment, as well as secondary literature.

1.3 Structure of the report

The following two sections provide the background to the study, including the rise of the service economy and skill training policies and programmes (section 2) and key aspects of political economy, migration and employment in Karnataka and Bengaluru (section 3). Section 4 presents the findings from our research with skill training centres and trainees in Bangalore, including processes of recruitment, training, job placement, and students' post-training trajectories. Section 5 summarizes the

data on the socio-economic backgrounds of the cohort of trainees studied. The sixth section presents the findings from the Raichur research. Section 7 provides an in-depth exploration of labour conditions and case studies of employees in three key sectors – beauty & wellness, retail, and transport. The final section presents the main conclusions and provides several policy recommendations.

Section 2. Background: Rise of Service Sector, Employment Crisis and Skill Development Policies

As background to the presentation of our study findings in the following sections, in this section we outline the larger political economic context which framed our research questions, drawing on recent literature on the changing economic and employment structure in India. The second section provides a critical discussion of skill training policies and programmes in India.

2.1 Structural change in the Indian economy

Recent and emerging literature on India's political economy highlights that the patterns of industrialization and urbanization in recent decades indicate an atypical trajectory (as compared to other late developmental experiences, for example in China and Southeast Asia). While the contribution of agriculture to GDP has steadily declined, the proportion of the population dependent on agriculture has remained disproportionately high. Between 1999-2000 and 2011-12, the share of agriculture in GDP declined from 23 per cent to 14 per cent, while its share in employment declined from 58 per cent to 49 per cent (GoI 2014). Thus, in 2011-12 close to half of total employment remained in agriculture. Moreover, growth in employment in agriculture and rural areas has been small: between 1993/94 and 1999/2000, overall only about 9.4 million jobs were created in rural areas, while the rural labour force increased by 17.7 million workers (Sundaram and Tendulkar 2005, cited in Ahsan & Narain 2007). The asymmetry between agriculture's low share in GDP but high share in employment has obvious implications for income and poverty, which have been widely noted. Why agriculture continues to harbour workers beyond its capacity is a complex problem, but one obviously related to the nature of industrial and urban growth (Hashim 2009).

India's pattern of urbanization has similarly followed an atypical trajectory. The policy focus on cities as key 'engines of growth' has not been matched by experience – despite high rates of economic growth, the rate of urbanization in India remains one of the lowest among developing countries, with less than one-third of population living in urban areas. The low growth of employment in agriculture and in rural areas makes the slow pace of urbanization even more remarkable, underscoring the lack of opportunities for relatively low-skilled workers in urban areas. As Kundu has shown, it is not the poorest who migrate to cities for work but the relatively better off and/or better informed among the rural population (Kundu and Sarangi 2007). In addition, the rise in the share of regular workers among rural-to-urban migrants at the place of destination points to mobility within the higher socio-economic strata (Kundu 2011, 2012). These studies suggest that patterns of migration

and urbanization in India are not in accord with the conventionally expected, unilinear developmental path.

These considerations highlight the need to take a closer look at the nature of urban work and its impact on the lives and opportunities of workers who are at the lower rungs of the urban wage structure. As has been much discussed, the post-liberalization decades in India were marked by high rates of economic growth yet also by industrial stagnation and growing unemployment. This trend has been termed 'jobless growth' as well as 'industry-less growth' (Maurya and Vaishampayan 2012). The overall consensus in the literature appears to be that the structural transformation of the Indian economy has been relatively slow compared to (for example) East Asian countries (Ahsan and Narain 2007; Hashim 2009). The share of manufacturing in the Indian economy has stagnated at low levels of both output and employment – in 2011-12 the sector accounted for only 14.4 percent of GDP and 12.6 percent of the workforce (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh 2014: 11). Manufacturing employment remained virtually stagnant between 1999 and 2010, and between 2004-5 to 2009-10 it showed a decline in absolute numbers of more than 5 million jobs (Ramaswamy and Agarwal 2012; Sen and Das 2015). The lack of industrial growth also means that India's economy remains largely agrarian, with 68.84% of the population residing in rural areas, according to the 2011 Census.

Given the stagnation in manufacturing, much hope was placed by some policymakers and industry leaders on the burgeoning services sector to lead the structural transformation of the economy and absorb surplus labour. Although services contributed 57% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013–14, the share of services in employment has not risen proportionately, increasing from 23.4% in 2004 to 30.2% at present (Basole *et al.* 2018: 82). Moreover, most service sector employment remains in low-value-added services, with high-value-added services accounting for only about 7% of the workforce (Saraf 2016: 17). However, during 2000-2010 employment in the services sector grew at a rate of 3.6 per cent per annum, as against the aggregate employment growth of 1.5 per cent. Several scholars have registered a sense of pessimism regarding the role of the services sector, and particularly the role of the IT and ITES industries, in leading development in India, given that the bulk of the workforce does not have the skills necessary to take up such jobs (Bardhan 2009; Frankel 2005; Kohli 2012; Ramaswamy and Agarwal 2012). When we look at the 'organized services' sector, the picture is even more alarming. The most rapidly expanding activities – finance, insurance and real estate sector and IT-related services and telecommunications (Finance, Services and Real Estate, or FSRE) – which now account for nearly 20 percent of GDP, employ less than 2 percent of the workforce (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2014: 11).

Thus, while it was expected that the burgeoning services sector would lead the structural transformation of the economy and absorb surplus labour, this has not been the case. For this reason,

several economists have questioned whether a services-led model of economic growth can actually generate enough jobs to absorb the growing youth population. As the Planning Commission acknowledged, 'the process of structural change in employment that one would expect with a period of unprecedented growth in output in the economy outside of agriculture, is not occurring fast enough' (Saraf 2016: 16-17). It is in the context of the structural imbalance in the economy and increasing unemployment that the skill training initiatives that we examine in this study need to be situated.

2.1.1 The unemployment crisis

Another major issue in contemporary India is that of youth unemployment. Although it is well recognized that job creation has not kept pace with economic growth, a new 'politics of unemployment' has emerged, as seen for instance in agitations by upper caste youth for reservations (Basole *et al.* 2019; Basole & Jayadev 2019). The crisis of unemployment has been exacerbated by the 'youth bulge', with India now having a median age of 28, and the sharp increase in education levels. With large numbers of educated youth entering the labour force, expectations in terms of employment are high, but are not matched by available opportunities. According to some observers, the wide circulation of new aspirations and consumer lifestyles means that many young people reject traditional occupations such as agriculture and urban informal self-employment – which traditionally absorbed large numbers of workers – and aspire instead for white-collar work or 'office jobs', which are in short supply. In particular, there is a widespread desire for government or public sector jobs even in the lowest categories, as shown in the large numbers of educated youth applying for such positions.

A paradox has emerged in this context: while educated unemployment appears to be rising, employers across various sectors complain about the paucity of skilled human resources. One explanation for this contradiction is that many educated job-seekers have general college degrees (and often substandard degrees) or basic 10th or 12th standard qualifications, creating an alleged crisis of 'employability'. According to this narrative, most educated and semi-educated youth are ill-equipped for the kinds of jobs they desire or that are on offer in industry, and they require significant further training to become 'job ready'. Yet we also need to ask whether the 'formal economy' is actually providing the kinds of opportunities they seek. This apparently contradictory situation – that employers cannot find skilled workers while educated youth complain about the lack of opportunities – suggests that either youth aspirations are unrealistic, or else the kinds of jobs that are on offer are not sufficiently attractive.

Figure 2.1: Government-sponsored job fair in Bangalore, attended by 9000 youth

2.1.2 Work and employment in the new service economy

Most service sector employment remains in the informal sector, with only about 26 million of the 140-150 million such workers in the organized sector. But the proportion of total employment in organized services increased from 11.5 percent in 2011 to 15 percent in 2015 (Basole *et al.* 2018: 20). This expansion reflects the professionalization and corporatization of services that were earlier provided mainly through informal arrangements, such as hospitality, housekeeping, big retail, transportation and logistics, financial services, beauty & wellness and security services. This 'new service economy' (Basole *et al.* 2018: 20) is expected to absorb large numbers of educated youth. However, while some 8.5 million people with a graduate or higher degree are seeking jobs in India, the majority report that they are unemployed because they have not found a job that matches their skills (Basole *et al.* 2018: 43).

Recent scholarship on urban employment and labour informality has focused on the service economy as a whole, yet there is a dearth of literature on the fast proliferating corporatized services sector. Although there has been little research on the kinds of jobs that have been created or the employment conditions in the new service economy, they seem to have in common certain features such as informality and precarity of employment – features that we elaborate in this report. Precarity and informality have long characterized labour across most sectors of the Indian economy, but what is significant here is that work in the 'organized sector' is also increasingly insecure and itinerant (Gooptu 2013b). While these new service workers are employed mainly by large corporate organizations or smaller registered companies, their employment conditions are largely non-formal, marked by weak implementation of labour laws, absence of unionization and formal contracts, job

insecurity and high rates of employee turnover. Pointing to the creation of a 'precariat' within the corporate sector, Gooptu argues that precariousness refers to much more than job insecurity or informality of contractual arrangements – it includes 'the lack of a secure niche in the labour market and the absence of steady occupational and employment opportunities relating to a particular set of skills, thus preventing upward social mobility and a stable career trajectory' (Gooptu 2013b: 11). At the same time, the labour market for these new forms of service work is increasingly organized through private employment and training agencies, often utilizing state resources, which have professionalized the recruitment and training of service workers. It is these processes of recruitment, training and employment of urban service sector workers that we have explored in the research presented here.

2.2 'Skill India' – Discourse and practice

The unemployment of millions of (mainly male) youth has become an object of deep concern for state and capital alike. Responding to constant complaints from industry about the paucity of skilled workers, the problem has been reframed as one of 'skills deficit', giving rise to numerous policies and programmes aimed at skill development. The policy response has largely been to deflect responsibility on to young people themselves, who are framed as 'unemployable' and in need of improvement through skill training. This shift has been reflected in numerous initiatives at the central and state levels – including the creation of a separate ministry for skill development, parastatal organizations such as the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) – originally set up as a public-private body to tap corporate funds – and a series of Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) comprised of mainly of industry representatives whose mandate is to guide policy-making and create skill standards and training programmes. The Skill India Mission aims to harness India's 'demographic dividend' and to mould, channel and harvest the aspirations and energies of the 'youth'.

In 2008 the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was set up on a public-private model to set standards for skill training and to raise and channel funding from government and private sources to skill development. A National Policy on Skill Development was introduced in 2009, with a target of skilling 500 million workers by 2022. To expand and rationalize skill training programmes and promote entrepreneurship, this was replaced by the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2015 (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015), which aimed to develop comprehensive skill training programmes to meet the target of skilling 402 million workers by 2022. This target is distributed across more than twenty ministries and organizations.

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was set up in 2014 to coordinate and manage all skill development activities across these various agencies. The MSDE directly manages four skill development schemes – Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY),

STAR, UDAAN and Vocationalisation of Education – which are implemented by MSDE nodal agencies. PMKVY is the flagship scheme of the Ministry, started in 2015 with an outlay of Rs.1500 crore. The government has also tried to standardize vocational and technical training and align it with industry requirements and international standards by developing a National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). Apart from these initiatives, the central government has set up new agencies such as the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) and the National Skill Development Fund (NSDF). All these initiatives have created a highly complex institutional structure at the central level for the governance and implementation of skill training and vocational programmes (Maithreyi, *et al.* nd 2017). Despite these changes, the policy framework has remained largely the same since 2008 – for instance, the PMKVY is implemented through the NSDC, which essentially promotes skill training delivery through NGOs and for-profit agencies.

The 2009 National Skill Policy represented a significant shift away from the earlier emphasis on vocational training through government-managed industrial training institutes (ITIs) and polytechnics, towards the promotion of skilling through a plethora of third party private sector organizations, which were tasked with training and finding jobs for young people. Significantly, the roadmap for this policy shift was provided by the World Bank (World Bank 2006). Under these schemes, private entities receive investments and soft loans from the government and are responsible for meeting skill targets. The NSDC is supposed to manage the entire system, but NSDC itself was largely controlled by the Ministry of Finance, which provided most of the funds (Ruthven 2018: 316).

In Karnataka, the need for skill development was recognized as early as 1977 when the state established the Directorate of Vocational Education. However, the Government of Karnataka took up skill development as a major policy in 2008 when a Policy on Skill Development was devised, even before the National Skill Policy was promulgated in 2009. The Ministry of Labour established its own Skills Commission with representatives from trade and industry to understand the need for skills among the youth. The objective was to provide suitable skill training for 15 lakh job seekers by 2020 and to provide them with placement. To accomplish these objectives, the government established the Karnataka Skill Development Corporation (KSDC), with a target of imparting skills and employment to 10 lakh persons within five years. KSDC has been proactively implementing skill training programmes through various departments, organizations and training centres. Through skill centres and job fairs, job-seeking youth could register on the government's portal kaushalkar.com and receive notifications about skill training or job opportunities relevant to their needs. In its aims and structure, CMKVY is almost the same as the central government's PMKVY. As part of CMKVY, the government is supposed to maintain a database of youth in each district who can be considered for skill training.

2.2.1 The ideology of skill development

A review of the various skill policy documents shows that they all follow a similar narrative structure. They begin by noting the country's large youth population (mentioning the often-cited statistics that over half of India's population is below 25, more than 65 percent is below 35, and by 2020 the average age will be 29 years). The narrative then provides projections of India's skilled manpower requirements for a growing economy, presents 'data' on the paucity of such manpower and outlines the policies and programmes that will fill this gap. These documents also emphasize the need to address 'youth aspirations', implicitly warning about the political dangers that are posed by legions of unemployed male youth. In the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship document (2015), Prime Minister Modi is quoted as saying:

> Today, the world and India need a skilled workforce. If we have to promote the development of our country then our mission has to be `skill development' and `Skilled India'. Millions and millions of Indian youth should acquire the skills which could contribute towards making India a modern country. I also want to create a pool of young people who are able to create jobs …

This statement reflects the government's implicit recognition that the economy (at least in its current form) will never create enough jobs to absorb all the excess workers, hence the increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship.

Apart from the internal inconsistencies in policy documents – the optimistic projections of future labour demand alongside an acknowledgment of the need to create jobs – what is striking is that the voices of these imagined skilled workers are almost totally absent. The National Skill Policy document also notes the need to 'raise the aspirations' of youth – a view that was echoed by skill training practitioners in our fieldwork (section 4). Thus, in the dominant policy discourse, youth lack not only skills but also aspirations, at least of the right kind (i.e., aspirations to fill the kinds of jobs that are available). How does this understanding of the ambitions and needs of youth in relation to employment compare with what young people themselves say? As we outline below, our field study points to a deep gulf between the official notion of the 'skill gap' and the perceptions and ambitions of young people who are targeted for training.

Figure 2.2: Advertisement for PMKVY

Figure 2.3: PMKVY job fair in Bangalore
(photograph by Vishaka Warrier)

Leaving aside the empirical questions of whether there is indeed a 'skill gap' and of what kind, and whether existing policies and programmes actually address the requirements of industries and employers, we need to ask why the growing and serious problem of unemployment has been reframed as one of 'employability'. While education remains at the centre of the national development policy agenda, it has increasingly been reshaped by calls for job-oriented education, more vocational education and skill development.

2.2.2 Skill policies and programmes - critical assessments

Despite rosy predictions about these various skilling initiatives, serious reviews of the skill training domain have been mostly negative, as the outcomes of these efforts and significant expenditure of public funds – either in terms imparting useful skills, enhancing the 'employability' of trainees, or providing better job opportunities to unemployed youth – are not clear. Most skill development programmes are designed from the perspective of business and employers, with little attention to the needs of youth themselves or the realities of local economies. For instance, responsibility for creating skill training curricula and accreditation standards has been given to the Sector Skill Councils, which represent industry. Moreover, as mentioned above, the establishment of NSDC in 2008 to provide government funding for skill training led to the proliferation of private skill training organizations

(which sprouted up to take advantage of the funding that was made available) and many uncoordinated interventions, whose impacts are rarely assessed.

Gooptu points to a contradiction at the heart of the national skill policy, which aims to 'reconcile a scheme for private sector profit by supplying trained labour to employers, on the one hand, with a welfare measure for employment and livelihood generation, on the other' (2018: 243). It is then not surprising that the policy has encountered significant problems, which led the government to appoint a review committee in 2016. Cases of corruption in skill training delivery also hit the media, giving the entire domain a bad name (Gooptu 2018: 243).

The 2016 review of the flagship government programme, the PMKVY and the Sector Skill Councils by the Sharda Prasad Committee detailed the drawbacks of this model of skill development and its implementation (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2016). The report pointed out that both the uptake of skill training and subsequent post-training job placement have been much below expectations, even as employers continue to complain about the 'unemployability' of trained youth. It is critical of the promotion of short-term skilling and certification programmes to the neglect of vocational education through ITIs and polytechnics, which offer longer term diploma courses – an approach that may not deliver marketable skills:

> Expenditure on PMKVY appears to be wastage of public resources without achieving the desired goals of providing employment to youth at decent wages and meeting the skill needs of the industry (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2016, Vol. I: 22).

Thus, one of the recommendations states:

> Short term courses being run under various schemes at present are not able to meet the twin objectives of meeting the exact skills needs of the employers and provide decent opportunities of livelihood for youth at decent wages. It has been recommended that these short term courses should be discontinued and only long term competency based courses run to acquire National Competency Standard Certificate, which will only entitle a person to employment in the country or abroad and will be able to meet the exact skills needs of the industry (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2016, Vol. I: 170).

The Committee was also highly critical of the governance structure and funding model of the NSDC, which has led to multiple issues with the functioning of the SSCs, including conflicts of interest. Significantly, the report notes that the SSCs are supposed to provide projections of labour and skill

demand for each sector, yet they have no mechanisms in place to collect such data – hence the constant refrain from industry about lack of skilled labour is rather dubious:

> During our consultation with the SSCs, we asked them how they would project demand side of skills if they do not have a credible sectoral Labour Market Information System. Most of them admitted that at present, they do not have any such system but also assured that they would develop an online portal to collect such data to project the demand side of the skills for their sector for use by all the stakeholders (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2016, Vol. I: 55).

Despite many recommendations for reform and several government efforts to restructure the skill development system and funding structure, it appears that these schemes continue to function in much the same way as earlier. At the same time, the promulgation of the CSR '2% law', mandating companies above a certain size to devote 2 percent of their profits to corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, has led to significant interventions by the private sector in this domain – with unknown outcomes.

Another major initiative is the National Employment and Employability Mission (NEEM), which was approved by the HRD Ministry in 2014. A private company, Teamlease (which is extensively involved in the skill training domain), had lobbied the government for this scheme and was then appointed as its nodal agency. Under this programme, companies are allowed to take apprentices in the age group of 16-40 years for 3-36 months, in any trade.[1] While the scheme is presented as a positive step towards making youth 'employable', apprenticeship schemes generally allow organizations to pay below minimum wage, even as training is not necessarily imparted. In her experience with a skill training organization, Ruthven found that industries in NOIDA were using the Apprenticeship Act to hire workers en masse [sic] on temporary contracts (2018: 322). It is not surprising then that Teamlease, whose main business is temporary staffing, has promoted this scheme; Teamlease also places many of their trainees as apprentices with companies in manufacturing, hospitality, automobile, retail and other domains. On the basis of her long experience in this domain, Ruthven concludes that this

> … new trend ... is away from contract and temporary workers, towards something more insidious: educational alliances are emerging as new ways to segregate and tie in young

[1] See Ruthven (2018) for a critical discussion of the National Employability through Apprenticeship Programme (NETAP), which is being used to circumvent laws governing contract labour.

> unskilled workers, which is no longer achieved by contractors nor temporary placements' (2018: 326).

In this context, skill training has become a big business, as witnessed in the establishment of new 'skill universities' such as Teamlease Skills University in Vadodara, which offers diploma courses in domains such as hospitality, financial services, banking, tourism, IT, mechatronics and pharmaceuticals, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Vocation. But few studies have attempted to assess the implications of this 'highly privatised, demand-driven skills economy' (Maithreyi *et al.* nd: 7). The push toward 'vocationalization of education' is another outcome of the new emphasis on skills: vocational courses are sought to be integrated into mainstream education institutions and curricula without any real reform in the education space itself– a turn that has received critical attention from education scholars and practitioners (Maithreyi *et al.* 2017; Sadagopal 2016; Saraf 2016).

To take one example, Odisha has emerged as the skills capital of the country where hotel management is an attractive, professional course which draws a large number of youth with 10-12 years of schooling from rural/semi-urban areas. At the top end, expensive hotel management courses – which are part of college undergraduate programmes – can place students in five-star or boutique hotels and exclusive restaurants with decent salaries and career prospects. Less expensive or even free courses with the same tag provide only some basic training in hospitality over a few months. With this certificate, youth from Odisha are given jobs in places such as the Bangalore airport, where they might be found working as waiters or behind counters in the cheaper staff canteens, earning Rs. 5000-6000 per month and housed in dormitory-like conditions in nearby hostels. Thus, under the banner of 'skills' we find a wide range of courses that channel youth into varied 'career' paths, depending on the type of training and socio-economic location of the student.

Ruthven (2018) argues that the national skill policy has been unsuccessful in part because of its 'supply-led and target-driven orientation', which has created a bias towards short-term 'top-up' courses for youth who already have secondary or ITI qualifications (Ruthven 2018: 316). Training centres have no incentive to offer longer-term courses because trainees would have to be placed in jobs that pay a significantly higher wage. This also means that

> … the new third-party entities must take on the burden of securing jobs for those trained in their centres, in spite of having no control over and little intelligence about workforce demand … In order to meet tough placement targets, the new entities have focused on larger employers in urban industrial centres. It is in the formal industries and services that numbers can be secured and, crucially, that the evidence—required by government to show that a job is

> secured—can be provided, in the form of a payslip or an online transaction into the trainee's bank account (Ruthven 2018: 317).

This background helps to explain some of our findings, presented in the following sections, about the aims, practices and shortcomings of Bangalore skill training centres, as well as their apparent lack of success in achieving their own objectives. The structure of the policy itself seems to set up skill training organizations (and youth undergoing skill training) for failure. As Ruthven writes:

> The declared rationale for the policy revamp is to ensure dividends from India's demographic moment, when the country has an exceptional proportion of young people of working age. But rather than examining how these young people can be skilled and aligned for future jobs (i.e., addressing the 'skill gap'), the government has responded to this demographic opportunity by putting them into work at least temporarily, regardless of skill levels (Ruthven 2018: 317).

It is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the implementation and effectiveness of government skill policies and programmes at the macro-level, but our micro-level findings do shed some light on how training programmes are functioning on the ground. As Gooptu argues, what is needed is in-depth empirical research together with new theoretical analyses of the skill training domain in relation to labour, employment and social mobility, highlighting the role of the state and private sector in 'shaping skill policy to mobilize labour', while also tracing how 'skill acquisition and employment are influenced by existing forms of inequality and social institutions such as caste and gender' (Gooptu 2018: 247). It is such an exploration that we have tried to pursue in this report.

Section 3. Karnataka and Bangalore - Economic Development, Migration and Employment

To provide the broader context to the themes pursued in this study of skills, migration and employment opportunities in two cities, Raichur and Bangalore, this section highlights the dominant features of the political economy of Karnataka state and Bangalore in particular. The first part of this section presents a broad discussion of Karnataka's political economy, highlighting the continuing dependence of a large segment of the population on agriculture, the narrowness of urban growth and the decline in manufacturing employment. Second, we outline the regional disparities between the northern and southern parts of the state, especially the absence of economic dynamism in the northern districts, which underlines income disparity between the two regions. The third section takes the discussion forward by presenting recent data on migration trends in the state. Fourth, we examine the economic and employment situation in Bangalore, drawing attention to the decline of manufacturing employment in the city and the predominance of service sector employment, which is mostly unregulated and informal.

3.1 Political economy of the state: Broad overview

Despite an impressive growth record, particularly from the 1990s onwards, some disquieting features of Karnataka's political economy have emerged: poverty in the state continues to be the highest, and measures of well-being the lowest, among the southern states. The poverty ratio (20%) places Karnataka in the 20th position in the list of 35 states.[2] In terms of overall human development, Karnataka stands at 11th position among 19 major states in India, and among the southern states is way behind Kerala (1) and Tamil Nadu (5) with respect to all indicators.[3] Thus there is an obvious duality in the state's developmental trajectory.

An important feature of Karnataka's development pattern is the preponderance of agricultural employment. As will be seen from Table 3.1, while the share of agriculture in GSDP halved between 1993 and 2005 and continued to decline rapidly thereafter, the share of agricultural employment in Karnataka declined by only 5% between 2005 and 2010. Between 2009-10 and 2013-14, the share of industry in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) declined from 26% to 23%, and the share of

[2] Kerala has a poverty ratio of 12% and Punjab 15.9%.

[3] In terms of specific human development indicators, Karnataka's IMR in 2011 was 35 per 1000 live births, whereas Kerala's was 12 and Tamil Nadu's was 22. In terms of nutritional deficiency of children below the age of 5, Karnataka's rank is 18th.

services expanded rapidly from 57% to 62% (GoK 2014). In 2011-12, the secondary sector accounted for 18% of the total workforce while the tertiary sector accounted for 26%. These patterns are reflected both in the low rates and narrowness of urbanization in the 1980s and 1990s and in the structure of urban employment. These points are discussed briefly below

Table 3.1: Agriculture's share in GSDP selected years

Year	Share in GSDP	Share in employment
1993	36	65
2005	18	61
2009-10	16	56
2013-14	15.3	55.8

Source: Economic Survey of Karnataka, relevant years (GoK 2014)

Regarding the pace of urbanization, most scholars agree that the level of urbanization in India remains low compared to other developing countries. In Karnataka, urbanization grew from 22% in 1961 to 38% in 2011. While the rate of urbanization in Karnataka has been above the national average, the narrowness of urbanization is to be noted. More than 65% of the urban population is concentrated in the three major transport corridors, viz, Bangalore-Belgaum, Mysore-Kolar and Mangalore-Karwar, while 66% of the urban population is concentrated in 23 Class-I cities. According to the Urban Development Policy Report (GoK 2009), one of the major factors contributing to the imbalance in Karnataka's urbanization pattern, as well as the state's development process, is the concentration of economic activities in Bangalore and its emergence as a primate city. The urban population of Bangalore district accounted for 37% of the state's urban population in 2011, and its share of the increase in urban population in Karnataka between 2001 and 2011 was 53% (Pani and Iyer 2013). The disparity in the pattern urbanization is clearly seen in the fact that the percentage of urban to total population is 88.08% Bangalore (Urban) district, compared to Dharwad (which comes next in level of urbanization) where the percentage of urban to total population is 55%; in Dakshina Kannada and Mysore districts, the percentage of urban population is 38 and 36%, respectively. There is an overall consensus that the process of urbanization in Karnataka has been overwhelmingly Bangalore-centric (GoK 2009; Pani & Iyer 2013). The concentration of urban growth in Bangalore indicates that the window of urban opportunities has been confined to this single urban space in the state.

The sectoral pattern of growth further highlights the narrowness of urban growth in Karnataka. In Karnataka, the share of industry and manufacturing in GSDP has been declining (Table 3.2). Karnataka's recent economic development has been led by growth in the services sector, which

increased its share of GSDP from 51% in 2004-5 to 56.3% in 2011-12. Employment in the secondary sector remains low, particularly in comparison to other states, at 18%.

Table 3.2: Share of industry and manufacturing in GSDP in the state of Karnataka

Karnataka	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Industry	29.10	28.66	28.36	26.34	24.68
Manufacturing	16.38	15.25	15.38	14.38	13.07

Source: Economic Survey of Karnataka, relevant years (GoK 2014)

Industry's low share in GSDP as well as in employment creation, and its decline over time, should be seen in the context of the emerging concern amongst scholars and policy makers regarding the overall trajectory of economic growth in India – in particular, the failure to generate manufacturing sector jobs. In Karnataka, the decline of manufacturing has been a matter of concern for successive governments. The Manufacturing Task Force appointed by the Congress government in 2013 provided, in its Report, an ambitious target of raising the secondary sector's share in GSDP to 25% by 2025.

3.2 Regional disparities

Regional economic disparity between the northern and southern parts of the state were first systematically recorded by the well-known D.M. Nanjundappa Committee, a finding that has since been endorsed by various researchers and government documents. According to this report (GoK 2002), out of the 39 most backward taluks in the state, 26 taluks are in northern Karnataka, 13 taluks in southern Karnataka, and 21 are in Kalaburagi Division; out of the total 61 relatively developed taluks, 40 are in southern Karnataka The Hyderabad Karnataka region in northern Karnataka comprises of the six most backward districts – Bidar, Gulbarga, Bellary, Raichur, Yadgiri and Koppal. According to the Karnataka Economic Survey for 2018-19, only five districts – Bengaluru Urban, Dakshina, Kannada, Udupi, Chikmagalur and Shivamogga – have a per capita income above the state average of Rs 1.42 lakh, and all of these districts are in south Karnataka (GoK 2019). Further, Kalaburgi – the revenue region comprising of Ballari, Bidar, Kalburgi, Koppal, Raichur and Yadagiri districts – stood lowest in per capita income. Kalaburgi's per capita income is less than half of the per capita income of Bangalore region (Table 3.3). Out of the 30 districts, nine of the lowest ten in terms of human development indices and per capita income belong to north Karnataka. Ten of the seventeen districts that have recorded the highest school dropout rates are also from north Karnataka

(GoK 2018). Table 3.4 shows the status of the northern districts in terms of health, education and urbanization. Kalaburagi division had the highest number of poor in 2011-12 (Table 3.5).

Table 3.3: District level income disparity

Bengaluru	INR 3,70,003 128.5% above state per capita income
Mysuru Region	INR 1,63,855 1.2% above state per capita income
Bengaluru region (excluding Bengaluru)	INR 1,26,328 22% below state per capita income
Belagavi region	INR 1,06,049 34.5% below state per capita income
Kalaburagi region	INR 95,887 40.78% below state per capita income

Source: Economic Survey of Karnataka 2018-19 (GoK 2019)

The state of Karnataka is dependent financially on Bangalore Urban, the district that contributes almost 36% of the state's gross domestic state product. A study conducted by the Centre for Multidisciplinary Development Research in 2012 on Socio Cultural Dimensions of Development in North Karnataka found that southern Karnataka, under the leadership of enlightened Maharajas of Mysore, took to modernization early, which led to the flourishing of industries, infrastructure, health, education, employment opportunities. In contrast, developmental initiatives were much delayed in North Karnataka (Prabhakar 2012).

Regional disparity has been exacerbated as the services sector in Bengaluru has grown whereas agriculture, which is the backbone of most northern districts, has stagnated. Most of the industrial development has been concentrated in the districts of Bangalore division; districts of northern Karnataka such as Gulbarga account for only 18.47% and 7.14% of industrial estates and sheds, respectively (Prabhakar 2012). Further, the industrial strategy of the state has been to prioritize industries such as information technology, biotechnology and food processing, which are mostly concentrated in developed districts such as Bangalore and Mysore. In addition, industrial development in North Karnataka has suffered due to the absence of economic, social and financial infrastructure. The top eight districts, namely Bangalore (14.17%), Dakshina Kannada (7.61%), Belgaum (6.00%), Mandya (5.95%), Tumkur (5.72%), Hassan (4.89%), Mysore (4.87%) and Shimoga (3.55%), account for almost half of the total employment in the state (GoK 2014)). The in-migration of educated and technically qualified people in search of employment, and the growth in private sector companies, further strengthened the development of South Karnataka (Prabhakar 2012).

Table 3.4: Urbanization within Karnataka - 2011

Top five districts		**Bottom five districts**	
District	Urban population in %	District	Urban population in %
Bengaluru	91	Kodagu	15
Dharwad	57	Koppal	17
Dakshin Kannada	48	Mandya	17
Mysuru	41	Chamarajanagar	17
Bellary	38	Yadagiri	19

Source: Economic Survey of Karnataka 2018-19: Spatial Distribution of Poverty in Karnataka: Evidence from NSSO data (GoK 2019).

Table 3.5: Incidence of poverty by divisions in Karnataka

Division	**Rural**		**Urban**	
	NSS 61st round	**NSS 68th round**	**NSS 61st round**	**NSS 68th round**
Kalaburagi	56.9	37.1	58.6	41.5
Belagavi	42.7	29.5	47.1	28.2
Bengaluru	36.6	18.8	9.1	5.5
Mysuru	18.5	12.6	23.4	8.9

Source: Niranjan & Shivakumar (2018: 490)

3.3 Migration in Karnataka and Bangalore

The influx of migrants into Bangalore has been driven by the industrialization of the city since the 1950s, which increased avenues of employment as well as the demand for labour in large-scale construction activities. Migration has been driven also by the rise in educational opportunities, medical infrastructure and business and industrial activities in the city. In this section we analyze the pattern of migration to Bangalore with regard to caste and class composition as well as the reasons for migration.

3.3.1 Patterns of migration

According to the 2001 Census of India, about 30.62% of the total population of Karnataka is considered as migrants.[4] Internal migration to Bangalore can be viewed as a culmination of four categories of movement: i) rural to urban, ii) rural to rural, iii) urban to rural, and iv) urban to urban. Migration can be classified into components such as intra-district, inter-district and inter-state. The highest inter-district in-migration population for the period 1971-2001 in the state was found in the district of Bangalore Urban.

Census data for 2001 for Karnataka state establishes that with increase in distance, the proportion of female migrants decreases. The data also identifies intra-district migration and rural to rural migration as the dominant streams. For the year 2001, the rural to rural stream of intra-district migration accounted for a larger proportion at 62.08%, as compared to inter-district and intra-state rural to rural migration, which accounted for 36.75% and 28.37%, respectively. The migration from rural to rural areas is dominated by females due to the prevalence of exogamous marriage in India, in which women move to join the husband's family after marriage.

Following rural to rural migration, the next stream that is high in volume is rural to urban migration. Rural to urban migration to Bangalore is mostly economic in nature, due to increased industrialization and growth of economic opportunities in the region. This has also resulted in a rise in urban to urban migration to Bangalore.

According to the 2001 Census, the movement of population from urban to rural areas in Karnataka, which is identified as inverse migration, is smaller as compared to rural to urban. With an increase in distance the volume of urban to rural migration also sees a rise. The two major reasons observed for such migration is marriage and movement of the entire family due to lack or loss of employment in urban areas.

3.3.2 Reasons for migration: Insights from Census data

The movement of the population from rural areas, from other towns, and from other states, to Bangalore can be attributed to the rise of Bangalore as an economic hub which provides many employment opportunities. Agrarian distress has also led to substantial migration from rural areas as workers move in search of employment. The population density of Bangalore has risen by 47% in the

---

[4] Census data used in this report are drawn from the Census of India reports for 1991, 2001 and 2011: Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. New Delhi. Retrieved from:
http://censusindia.gov.in/DigitalLibrary/data/Census_1991/Publication/India/45969_1991_CHN.pdf
http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-Common/CensusData2011.html
http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/census_data_2001.html

past ten years due to increased migration. According to the 2001 Census, the percentage of migrants to total population in Bangalore stood at 31.9% , a figure that rose significantly in 2011 to 53.4% (Census of India 2011).

The 1991 Census found that out of the total migrants in Karnataka, 10.87% cited employment as the reason for migration, 18.14% said their family had moved, while for 43.89% marriage was the reason for migration (Table 3.8). As Table 3.8 indicates, while 26.20% of males cited employment as the reason for migration, the percentage of females were higher in the category that identified the family moved as the reason (14.34%) and marriage as the reason (65.55%).

The 2001 Census identified a similar pattern of reasons for migration – 11.37% of migrants migrated for employment, 2.08% for education, 0.94% for business, 42.31 % for the purpose of marriage; 12.3% moved with the household, and 21.43% moved due to other reasons (Table 3.9). The major reason for migration among females was marriage or shifting of the family: 63.22% of female migrants moved due to marriage, and 11.16% of female migrants moved with the household, whereas the other categories of employment, business, education, and moved after birth only accounted for 2.60%, 0.21%, 0.87% and 6.19% of the female migrants, respectively. However, the major reason identified among male migrants was employment; this reason was cited by 28.13% of total male migrants (Table 3.9). The data also indicates that around one-third of rural to urban male migrants moved for employment and education. The percentage of male migrants moving in search of business and education stood at 2.31% and 4.40%, respectively (Table 3.9). The proportion of male and female migrants in search of higher education increased with distance in the year 2001.

Table 3.6: Percentage distribution of all Karnataka migrants stating reasons for migration, 1991

	Sex	**Work/ Employment**	**Business**	**Education**	**Family moved**	**Marriage**	**Natural Calamities**	**Others**
Percentage of total migrants	Total	10.87	1.41	3.05	18.14	43.89	0.65	21.99
	Male	26.20	3.41	6.47	24.79	2.83	1.24	35.06
	Female	2.79	0.36	1.24	14.64	65.55	0.34	15.08

Source: Census of India 1991

The 2011 Census found a rise in the number of immigrants from within the state of Karnataka to Bangalore. While the aggregate for the year 2001 for migration to Bangalore from within the state of Karnataka was 60.68%, it increased to 65.64% for the year 2011. However, for migration to Bangalore from other states, the percentage decreased from 38.75% in 2001 to 33.39% in 2011 (Table 3.10).

Table 3.7: Percentage distribution of all Karnataka migrants stating reasons for migration, 2001

	Sex	Work/ Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with household	Others
Percentage of total migrants	Total	11.37	0.94	2.08	42.31	9.58	12.30	21.43
	Male	28.13	2.31	4.40	2.37	16.06	14.47	32.26
	Female	2.60	0.21	0.87	63.22	6.19	11.16	15.76

Source: Census of India 2001

The pattern of intra-state migration to Bangalore for work and employment remained more or less the same for 2001 (25.9%) and 2011 (25.0%). The migrating male population, however, declined from 23% in 2001 to 20.5% in 2011, whereas the number of females migrating for work and employment to Bangalore from within the state increased from 2.9% in 2001 to 4.5% in 2011. The percentage of women migrating to Bangalore from other states for work and employment increased from 3.6% in 2001 to 5.2% in 2011, and there was a rise in the aggregate from 32.4% in 2001 to 33.6% in 2011. These data suggest that unmarried women are increasingly migrating to Bangalore on their own for work – a pattern that was seen in our case studies as well (see section 7).

Migration within the state for the purpose of education saw a reduction in the percentage of males, from 1.9% in 2001 to 1.5% in 2011, whereas the percentage of females increased from 0.5% in 2001 to 0.7% for the year 2011. With regard to migrants from other states to Bangalore for education, the percentage of men reduced from 3.0% in 2001 to 2.3% in 2011, whereas for women it increased from 1.0% in 2001 to 1.2% in 2011. While the aggregate for intra-state migration to Bangalore for the purpose of business decreased from 1.4% in 2001 to 1.32% for the year 2011, the percentage of females migrating for this purpose increased from 0.2% to 0.32%, while the percentage of males decreased from 1.2% in 2001 to 1.0% in 2011. Migrants coming to Bangalore from other states for business also reduced from 3.3% in 2001 to 2.5% in 2011 (Tables 3.11 and 3.12). There is an interesting trend with regard to marriage migration to Bangalore from within Karnataka – the percentage of females migrating for this reason decreased from 14.3% in 2001 to 13.8% in 2011.

The total proportion of migrants in Bangalore who come from within the state of Karnataka increased from 60.68% in 2001 to 65.64% in 2011. This can be explained by the increase in percentage of females migrating for work and employment, education and business, along with a significant increase in percentage of both men and women migrating with the household.

Table 3.8: Migrants to Bangalore, 2001 and 2011

Year	2001	2011
Total migrants	2086719 (100)	5140755 (100)
From within Karnataka state	60.68	65.64
From other states	38.75	33.39
Other countries	0.57	0.91
Unclassifiable	0	0.06
Total	100	100

Source: Census of India, 2001 and 2011

Table 3.9: Migrants by place of last residence and reason for migration to Bangalore from within Karnataka

	Sex	Work/ Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved with household
Within Karnataka 2011	Persons	25	1.32	2.2	14.5	20.3
	Male	20.5	1.0	1.5	0.7	8.5
	Female	4.5	0.32	0.7	13.8	11.8
Within Karnataka 2001	Persons	25.9	1.4	2.4	14.7	15.4
	Male	23	1.2	1.9	0.4	6.3
	Female	2.9	0.2	0.5	14.3	9.1

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011

Table 3.10: Migrants by place of last residence and reason for migration to Bangalore from other states

	Sex	Work/ Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved with household
Other states 2011	Persons	33.6	2.5	3.5	15.6	22.8
	Male	28.4	2.03	2.3	0.7	8.9
	Female	5.2	0.47	1.2	14.9	13.9
Other states 2001	Persons	32.4	3.3	4.0	17.3	21.1
	Male	28.8	3.0	3.0	0.6	8.1
	Female	3.6	0.3	1.0	16.7	13.0

Source: Census of India, 2001 and 2011

3.3.3 Influx of unskilled and semi-skilled labour: Rural to urban migration

Skilled labour (those possessing technical qualifications, diplomas or graduate degrees) constituted 11.68% of migrants in 1981 and 16.47% in 1991, and by 2011 this proportion had gone up to 23.86%. A study by the Centre for Policy Research found that Bangalore has the highest share of migrants who are highly educated in India, at 47.7% (Mukhopadhyay and Sivaramakrishnan 2013). Bangalore, as a major IT hub and centre for scientific institutions, attracts many highly qualified personnel. Urban Bangalore thus sees more in-migration of male migrants with higher qualifications, compared to in-migration from rural areas by migrants with primary, middle or secondary school education. A large portion of female migrants to Bangalore are illiterate or have received primary school education.

A study conducted in Bangalore found that the majority of the migrants were either agricultural laborers or farmers before migration (Sridhar and Srinath 2010). The study further shows that other factors such as large size of household, small size of agricultural holding and poor public services in rural areas also contribute to rural-urban migration to Bangalore. Rural to urban migration is most prevalent amongst low-skilled workers who engage in circular migration, i.e., who have some employment in their villages and come to the city for seasonal work. Short duration mobility is higher amongst the poor as compared to middle-class households (Kundu and Sarangi 2007). Bageshree (2015, citing Thorat) notes that in Karnataka rural to rural migration is highest amongst SCs (73%), STs (78 %) and OBCs (58 %). In contrast, the share of SCs (14 %) and STs (16 %) in rural-to-urban migration is lower than the average (21%), OBC (20 %) and others (25 %).

The rate of circular migration is thus higher in rural areas and is mostly prevalent in drought prone districts with low agro-ecological potential and poor access to credit and debt. Circular migration is also higher among SC and ST communities. Circular migration has become the norm among uneducated workers in several rural areas, whereas permanent migration is seen among workers who are more educated. Hence the illiterate and unskilled workers dominate seasonal labour migration (Deshingkar 2006). The possibility of earning a higher income in cities (than what is available to them in their villages) from available temporary jobs in the urban informal sector is one of the driving factors of circular migration. However, the insecurities of work and income, combined with the associated vulnerabilities of city life, propel many to return home during some months. This process highlights that the city offers few opportunities to unskilled workers to embark on a stable urban work life, or to aspire to live in the city permanently. It is also noteworthy that the majority of unskilled migrants say that they wish to return permanently to their native places if they could get decent incomes and opportunities in non-agricultural jobs there (Sridhar and Srinath 2010).

These findings set the background for a discussion in the next section of the employment structure in Bangalore. The following sections draw on our detailed field studies to throw light on the

situation of semi-educated youth in rural areas and small towns who come to Bangalore to work in the service economy.

3.4 Bangalore: Economic structure and employment

The pattern of sectoral growth and employment in Bangalore city replicates the patterns at the state and national levels, particularly in terms of the decline of industry. From the mid-1990s onwards, there has occurred a steady decrease of the share of secondary sector (industry) and of registered manufacturing in Gross District Domestic Product (GDDP). Commensurately, the share of the tertiary sector in GDDP has steadily gone up. Urban employment is dominated by the tertiary (services) sector, rather than by the secondary (manufacturing) sector. Within the tertiary sector, urban employment is concentrated in trade, hotels and restaurants, financing, insurance, real estate and business services, community, social and personal services. In 2004-5, these service industries accounted for 66% of total employment in Bangalore. This is higher than that for all million plus cities (62%) or for urban India (57%) (Narayana 2011). By 2011-12, the share of services in employment had risen to 73.25%.

The structure of employment becomes clearer when we see that in Bangalore the share of the labour force in wage/salaried employment is higher compared to other cities and to other forms of employment. Thus, the share of wage salaried employment increased from 48% in 2004-5 to 55% in 2011-12. However, manufacturing sector employment remained lower in the city, compared to urban India. As the service sector constitutes 73% of employment in Bangalore, one would assume that much of what is described as regular/salaried employment is to be found in the service sector.

Both in manufacturing and in services, much of unskilled employment is informal in nature. Salaried employees in the informal sector may be denied minimum wages, security of tenure and other employment-related benefits such as insurance. This is by and large true of manufacturing sectors such as construction and readymade garments and in the lower rungs of the services sectors such as domestic work, security, maintenance, hospitality and retail. The point to underline here is that while the figures indicate a relatively large percentage of persons employed as regular/wage salaried, micro-level studies of salaried/regular employment reveals a somewhat different story of precarious employment defined by the classic features of the informal sector, i.e., unregulated wages, uncertain tenure and absence of insurance.

Bangalore, once an important centre of public sector manufacturing, has seen the gradual erosion of this sector in the last two decades, prompted both by state policies and market forces which promoted and facilitated the increasing dominance of private sector investment and enterprises (RoyChowdhury 2003). State support to the emerging IT sector also meant that employment opened

up for an expanding category of technically qualified, middle-class, white collar workers, but not for large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The decline of the public sector was also associated with the near collapse of the small-scale industries sector, which had been ancillary to, and largely dependent on, orders from public sector manufacturing companies (Kalasannavar 2011). As both public sector and small-scale industries began to shrink in terms of employment of blue-collar workers, the only two domains in the secondary sector left for unskilled labour were construction and export-oriented ready-made garment industries. Earlier work revealed that while large numbers are employed in these sectors, wages and working conditions remain unregulated and highly coercive (RoyChowdhury 2015, 2017).

What has Bangalore's overall economic dynamism – particularly the vastly increased volume of services like hospitality, entertainment, transportation, retail selling, luxury accommodations, corporate colonies, medical services and so on – meant for the city's poor? A new class of service sector workers has indeed emerged – those with education levels up to class 10 or 12, working in Bangalore's vast and multiplying service domains. Recent studies of the workforce and nature of work in these sectors indicate a high degree of variation in compensation and employment conditions, marked by insecurity of tenure and the extractive role of contracting agencies (RoyChowdhury and Vani 2015).

This broad overview indicates certain patterns of exclusion inherent to the structure of the city's economy as it has evolved over the past three decades. Bangalore in that sense provides an appropriate location for examining the impact of skill training on urban as well as rural youth, who have not had access to higher education and are looking for employment in the lower rungs of the services sector.

Section 4. Skill Training in Bangalore - Producing Service Workers

Bangalore is home to a large number of skill training institutions, including for-profit private companies, not-for-profit organizations and government institution. We chose skill training centres in Bangalore as our main research sites as they appeared to be key nodes where rural youth are recruited, trained and then channelled into urban service sector jobs.

4.1 Bangalore's skill training 'ecosystem'

In Karnataka, skill development takes place through a convergence of the PMKVY and the state's Kaushalya Karnataka/ CMKVY, which was initiated by former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah (popularly called as Kaushalya Karnataka).[5] While the policy framework and funding programmes are designed by national and state governments, much of the implementation of skill training has been through private for-profit companies and NGOs (as discussed in section 2), which draw on government as well as corporate funding (through CSR initiatives). According to several key informants, Bangalore skill training centres primarily concentrate on preparing youth to fill service sector jobs such as in retail sales, back office support services, personal services such as beauty & wellness and home health care and driving. Some centres also train workers in construction and allied skills such as electrician and plumbing and industrial skills such as welding. The focus on service sector jobs reflects the structure of the state economy and particularly Bangalore's urban economy (discussed in section 3).

Skill training centres in Bangalore run the gamut from for-profit firms to not-for-profit charitable organizations or NGOs (non-governmental organizations), to those that combine for-profit and not-for-profit models. While many NGOs receive funds from NSDC or other central skill programmes such as PMKVY to support their training programmes, a major source of funding is from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of private companies. NGOs such as Pragati also draw on traditional sources of funding such as private donations from individuals and trusts. As of 2017, Karnataka had a total of 98 skill training centres registered with the NSDC, of which 59 are located in Bangalore. But apart from the NSDC registered centres, Bangalore hosts a large number of private for-profit and not-for-profit organizations involved in skill training of various kinds. However, there is no central database from which to obtain hard data on the skill training universe of Bangalore or Karnataka.

[5] https://www.kaushalkar.com/about-us/

The head of a private for-profit training organization recounted to us in detail the evolution of skilling industry in Bangalore and its many problems, ranging from the dysfunction of the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) to the lack of organization in the 'skill training ecosystem'. According to her, the ecosystem of skilling is still at a nascent stage, but the market has worked to mainstream skilling programmes. In her very market-oriented view, the involvement of the government in this domain has 'disrupted the market' and created chaos, because to 'appease the electorate' state agencies want to impart training free of cost, which hampers the freedom and efficiency of skill organizations. She pointed out that many organizations entered this space only to get government funding, especially 'fly-by-night operators' that engage in unethical practices to tap government funds. She also complained about the constant reinvention of skill programmes: *'After STAR came PMKVY, before that was something else ... whatever was done earlier is undone'.*

Indeed, the skill training space does appear to be quite 'disorganized', with multiple players and interests vying to get a piece of CSR and PMKVY funds. While the present report does not directly address these issues, this section provides a ground-level view of the 'skill training ecosystem' based on our findings from case studies of four skill training centres in Bangalore.

4.2 Skill training organizations in Bangalore - case studies

Our case studies included three skill development NGOs and one private training institute. 'Pragati' and 'SkillConnect' are older and well-established centres with centres across the country, while 'Move-up' was recently established and operates mainly in Bangalore. Pragati offers free or subsidized courses in several occupational domains, while SkillConnect offers training in a wider range of skills and includes a for-profit company as well as a not-for-profit wing. 'Allure Institute', which is affiliated with a major chain of beauty salons, offers paid as well as free courses in beauty and wellness. All of these organizations receive CSR money, two centres also partner with the NSDC, while one has a purely fee-paying model without an 'uplift' agenda. This selection of case studies thus represents a range of types and sizes of skill training institutes operating in the skill development domain, although certainly, given the limited scope of the study, we have not covered the entire range (in particular, we did not study for-profit institutions in depth).

The three NGOs in our sample are broadly similar in terms of the kinds of courses on offer and the modalities of training, but they differ in some respects such as length of training, whether they collect fees or provide free courses, and so on. These organizations cater to students from Bangalore as well as outside the city. The courses offered focus primarily on lower-end service sector jobs such

as retail sales, driving and beauty, and graduates are placed in jobs mainly in Bangalore. Brief descriptions of our partner organizations (all names are pseudonyms) are provided below:

- **'Move-up'** is a non-profit organization that was launched in July 2015, with the stated goal of alleviating poverty through skill training. They provide skill training to underprivileged youth, mainly from rural areas, and mainly from Karnataka. This NGO has established two residential skill training centres in Bangalore, one for girls and one for boys. Their training programmes include Beauty & Wellness, Sales Management, Driving and Plumbing, and all are for three months (100 days). All their courses are free apart from a Rs.500 registration fee, and students are provided with free food and accommodation during their stay. Move-up trains around 2000 students every year. They also guarantee job placement, mainly in Bangalore-based companies. Move-up is supported mainly by CSR funds from major companies and corporate trusts, particularly IT companies. In this organization our cohort of student respondents were enrolled in Sales Management, Beauty and Driver training courses.

- **'Pragati'** is a non-profit organization focusing on youth empowerment, launched by a charitable trust in 2003. The organization has 50 skill training centres across the country and provides 50-day training programs in domains such as Retail Sales, Hospitality & Guest Care and Administrative Assistant. Pragati charges a nominal fee, which students may pay in instalments or after they are employed. Fees range from Rs. 2500 to 5500 or Rs. 4000 to 7000 (with hostel facilities), depending on the course. They also provide placement for students completing the course. Pragati partners with NSDC to fund its programmes, and also receives CSR funding from corporates such as Infosys. Since its establishment, around 8,000-10,000 students have passed out. At Pragati our cohort of trainees were from the Admin Assistant and Retail courses.

- The stated goal of **'SkillConnect'** is to facilitate sustainable livelihoods for men and women. The organization has training centers across the country, offering a wide range of service skills such as in beauty and telecom services, but also provide training in more traditional and manual skills such as construction, tailoring and auto repair. Like Move-up, students pay Rs. 500 for registration, but the courses – which are mainly non-residential – are free. The training period is for two months, following which the students are placed in three-month internships (for some courses). SkillConnect partners with NSDC and other government organizations, and also has numerous corporate partners. It is constituted as a for-profit firm with not-for-profit wings. Our student cohort at SkillConnect were from the Beauty and Auto Repair Technician courses.

- **'Allure Institute'** was established by a large beauty salon and cosmetics company in association with a business training giant to provide training in beautician and allied skills. The institute has eight branches in Bangalore, and also has a presence in other metro cities and Tier-2 cities and smaller towns across India. It offers courses such as skincare, hairstyling, make-up and cosmetology, among others. Allure charges fees ranging from Rs. 10,000 to 45,000 for short duration courses (typically one week) to Rs. 80,000 to 300,000 for basic and advanced level courses of three months to a year. Except a few trainees who were inducted from disadvantaged communities and exempted from paying fee due to the intervention of a senior trainer, most trainees are drawn from the middle and upper socio-economic strata. The Allure Institute boasts of state-of-the-art facilities for imparting quality training that is recognized globally, and provides placement assistance for trainees who have successfully completed a course. The training module is designed with a view to enhance opportunities for practical application of taught courses and development of qualities such as time management and self-presentation that are considered crucial for landing jobs in the beauty and wellness industry. Our cohort of respondents from this institute were placed in different salons in the city.
-

Figure 4.1 Poster for a skill training centre in Bangalore

4.2.1 Philosophy and aims

While numerous for-profit skill training institutes sprang up when major government funding for skill development became available (see section 2), many non-governmental organizations have also entered the domain of skill training. These organizations are driven by a clear social purpose rather than profit. Founders and personnel of the NGOs we studied strongly believe that skill training can facilitate economic mobility and address the problem of youth unemployment. All the organizations had identified the expanding urban service economy as the main source of employment opportunities for young people from marginalized households.

Both leaders and employees of these organizations articulated a desire to 'make a difference' to poor households. In meetings with us, senior managers of **Move-up** asserted that their aim is 'poverty alleviation', which they believe can be achieved by equipping students for formal sector employment, i.e., jobs in corporate organizations in metropolitan cities. Their aim is to lift young people out of poverty by providing remunerative employment opportunities, which (they believe) are only available in large cities such as Bangalore. As 'Rahul',[6] a founder of Move-Up, explained, working in the 'formal economy' is the only route to social and economic mobility, hence their training is oriented to jobs in the urban service economy, which is where employment opportunities are available. Like other NGO leaders we spoke to, Rahul is convinced that this model of rural-to-urban transition is the solution to poverty, and he spoke passionately about his mission to uplift poor households through skill training. He argued that rural areas do not hold any opportunities for educated youth, while urban employment in jobs such as sales, transport and call centres provide the best route to social and economic mobility. Hence migration to the city is essential to move people out of poverty, because it is only in the city can young people be effectively transformed into aspirational subjects and find decent jobs.

Rahul also told us that they selected vocations in sectors where the job is 'scalable' and where there is potential for entrepreneurship, such as beauticians and drivers, and have avoided sectors such as security services where there is 'no possibility of progression'. Their graduates are placed in retail stores, domestic call centres, beauty parlours, chain restaurants and transport companies, mainly in Bangalore. Their strategy is to put students on a career path, or at least a job mobility path, by placing them in corporate organizations. Their programmes are thus deliberately designed to encourage the migration of rural youth to urban areas, where they can be transformed into 'trained' urban service workers.

[6] Pseudonyms are used for all persons and institutions mentioned in this report.

SkillConnect has three areas of engagement – vocational education, employment and entrepreneurship. According to the head of the organization, 'Sujatha', their aim is to provide training that builds capacity: *'If we had only engaged in placements or short-term trainings, it would not result in a wage increase'.* She emphasized the need to motivate and encourage students, because *'the first job will never give you what you aspire for – you have to handhold them for a period of time and build technical capacity because vocational work is paid on the basis of experience … never on knowledge'.* From their experience, they learned that certification alone does not lead to a wage premium, not does skill training in most cases -- what is required is job experience. For this reason, SkillConnect is trying to move beyond training and placement activities to integrate apprenticeships in their programmes. She explained that under this framework, trainees would get certified in the skill only after completion of stipulated internships.

SkillConnect is also trying to foster entrepreneurship and self-employment, given that the employment scenario is never going to provide enough jobs for youth. Sujatha explained:

> *Over the next two years we will convert every one of our centres into incubation centres. This means we will push them to do either an internship or apprenticeship, and then after that, those who want to set up their own, we will give them that support.*

Another initiative of SkillConnect is to set up community-based enterprises located close to trainees' homes, which will be run collectively by them to provide entrepreneurial experience. The organization raised a first-class default guarantee to help them get Mudra loans to support their enterprises, and they have structured investment programmes for their incubators.

While Move-up and SkillConnect provide free training, **Pragati** believes that charging a nominal fee for their courses will ensure that trainees value and respect the training and will help curb the problem of attrition. For trainees from economically weaker sections, Pragati has a provision for paying fees on instalment basis. Thus, fees act as a reinforcer to encourage youth to complete the course.

In their recruitment, publicity and fund-raising materials, skill training centres narrate stories about young people who have achieved their dreams and been lifted out of poverty after completing their courses and entering urban employment. The trainers and other staff of skill centres at all levels are genuinely convinced that they are putting young people on a path of upward mobility, and they pursue this work with great passion and almost evangelical zeal. A Pragati trainer said:

When I reach home, I do not have any grudge, I am happy. Yes, I feel very connected with the students and youth. In fact, if someone offers me a counselling job, which I was aspiring for, I will think twice. I am more inclined now to choose training the youth.

A trainer from Move-up echoed this sentiment: *'I am contributing in whichever way I can to the society. So, I am happy to be part of the poverty alleviation programme of Move-up'.*

However, Sujatha provided us with a comprehensive overview of the skill training domain, where she pointed out that students who are routed into retail sales or call centre jobs are relatively better-off (they come from the 'top of the bucket') than the masses of unemployed youth who constitute 'bottom of the bucket' (i.e., who come from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds and often have not even completed 8th standard). The latter would already be employed in unskilled or semi-skilled work such as construction labour, or self-employed in informal sector activities, because of the sheer need for survival. Consequently, this 'bottom of the bucket' segment is very difficult to tap for skill development programmes, as their educational levels are low and most are already working and cannot take time off for training. Of all the organizations we studied, only SkillConnect has made an attempt to address the needs of this segment of unemployed youth by providing construction worker training. But even SkillConnect focuses mainly on those with 10th standard and above education, who are routed into service sector jobs. Sujatha's narrative thus suggests that the most marginalized and precarious groups do not fall into the target net of most training centres, despite their stated objective of facilitating upward mobility and alleviating poverty.

4.2.2 Organization, management and funding

All the training centres we studied are organized around different teams, such as the content production team, training team, mobilization team and placement team. Overall coordination is carried out from the head office based in Bangalore, which guides the recruitment and training processes at different training centres. Move-up has set up residential centres (one each for girls and boys, each headed by a Principal) where students (who are mostly recruited from outside Bangalore) are required to stay and learn for the duration of the course. SkillConnect and Pragati offer residential facilities only for a few courses, while the others are taught in non-residential training centres that serve students mainly from neighbouring areas. Allure's training centre largely caters to trainees from within the city.

While Pragati is managed like a typical NGO in terms of staffing and organizational practices, Move-up follows more corporate management ideas and practices. This probably is because Move-up's leadership is drawn mainly from the corporate sector. Its founders had left lucrative corporate

jobs (especially in the IT industry) to contribute to social development through skill training. Similar to their views on economic development and social mobility, their approach to training and management reflects this background. For example, the head of the mobilization and outreach team described Move-up's first challenge as being able to 'find the right customers for the right social programme' – by which he meant identifying the right candidates for the appropriate courses. His language expresses the corporate approach that we observed at Move-up more generally, such as in the setting and monitoring of the achievement of organizational goals. Moreover, Move-up has close connections with multinational corporations that provide CSR funding and placements, and the internal assessment of training is also sometimes conducted by employee volunteers of these MNCs. (This system is meant to expose trainees to external assessments, while the employee volunteers fulfil the CSR obligations of their employers.)

Move-up is primarily supported by CSR funds from various corporate houses, and its leaders even said that they are not interested in government funding. They explained that they have developed their own training modules and processes, and if they accept government funding, they would have to follow a different pattern:

> *We don't really want to take NSDC money as they prescribe the norms, training protocols, etc, which would then force us to reorient the training courses in certain ways, such as by increasing the number of hours of training. Also, NSDC has a very fine-grained job description matrix linked to particular skills; for plumbers, there are three to four different job codes, each with their own training requirements – this is something that we would find difficult to conform with.*

In contrast, Pragati receives funding from central skill training schemes like PMKVY as well as CSR funding from corporates. SkillConnect avails of funding from NSDC as well as CSR sponsorship. For SkillConnect's auto service technician course, the training is wholly sponsored by a manufacturing company. However, the head of Skill Connect echoed a similar view of the requirements that are attached to NSDC funding:

> *I fundamentally don't agree with many of the lab requirements that they have. For example, they want an AC classroom and AC lab. If I put my auto service student in an AC lab, then tomorrow he has to go out and work where he won't have an AC. So, this is stupid. Don't put regulations where you make them soft.*

Allure Institute, as mentioned earlier, is a for-profit training center that is owned and managed by major branded chain of beauty salons. The normal fees for the courses are quite high. However, through its collaboration with another organization, free training is provided to needy students, of which there are a few in each batch.

4.3 Producing service workers

This section describes the methods of recruitment and training that are employed to produce service sector workers.

4.3.1 Mobilization and motivation

Skill training centres recruit students through a range of modalities, including advertisements in newspapers and social media, job fairs, partner referrals (through tie-ups with rural NGOs), and through 'mobilization drives'. A large part of the work of the NGOs we studied is what they call 'mobilization', i.e., the recruitment of students. Despite offering free or subsidized training and job placement, leaders and recruitment officers of skill organizations find it very difficult to enrol sufficient students to fill up each batch.

All the organizations we studied have dedicated mobilization teams, which regularly visit Tier-2 cities and smaller towns, and villages in 'backward' areas such as north Karnataka to identify potential students and try to persuade them to enrol in their training programmes. It is mainly youth in the age group 18-25 years with at least 10th standard education who are targeted by these mobilization activities. Because the pay in most service jobs is low, these NGOs have more success recruiting youth from rural areas. They also run mobilization drives in urban slums in Bangalore, but with modest success -- they believe that 'unemployed' low-income Bangalore youth are not attracted to join the regular workforce because they have other, easier ways to make money.

During mobilization drives, the teams use various tactics to try to convince young people and their parents of the value of the courses they offer and of the desirability of the jobs in which they are promised placement. This is a particularly difficult task in rural areas, where people are often suspicious of their motives in offering free training and job placement in Bangalore, especially when recruiting girls. People in the kinds of remote areas that the mobilization teams visit are often unfamiliar with the kinds of work on offer or the implications of getting such employment in the city. Mobilizers screen videos and display colourful brochures to show potential students what to expect, and their 'marketing' strategies highlight optimistic stories of young people who have achieved their dreams and been lifted out of poverty through training. The most attractive feature of the training programmes is English language training, which is a skill that many young people believe is necessary for any kind of

employment they may seek. The prospect of learning English and computer skills was a clear motivating factor for many youth, as was the promise of a job at the end of training, while they were less interested in the specific job-oriented skills promised.

In addition to family resistance, trainers attribute the reluctance of young people to enrol in their programmes to their 'low aspiration levels'. They believe that youth in rural areas lead 'comfortable lives' – their basic needs are taken care of by their parents and they have a lot of spare time to 'roam around' with their friends, so they are not motivated to acquire new skills. Motivators see one of their main tasks as raising 'aspiration levels' and convincing rural youth that the path to progress is employment in a metro city such as Bangalore. As one placement officer put it: *'If our team hadn't gone and brought them here, they would still be sitting at home. If they wanted to do something, they would have done it long ago … motivation and inspiration are a bit less here'.*

Apart from telling young people and their families about what they will learn and the kinds of jobs they can expect, mobilizers highlight these benefits of the training. One driving trainee said:

> *They told us, 'You people just roam around in the village, better if you guys come with us to Bangalore'. They also told us that they will provide us with free accommodation, food, and teach us English and driving. They said they will provide us with DL* [driving license] *also.*

Figure 4.2: Mobilization team in action

Motivators are given targets for the number of students they should recruit for each batch, and they receive incentives based on the number they sign up. Accompanying a mobilization team to rural Raichur, our RAs observed that the team worked tirelessly, walking from house to house armed

with a spiral bound book containing information about the centre and filled with images of former students on their graduation day. Prospective students and their families were shown a video on an iPad about successful graduates and their current jobs. To increase their credibility and the effectiveness of the mobilization, the team had arranged to be accompanied by a local MSW students who was familiar with the villages where they were 'campaigning', and they also took the help of local NGOs and a church engaged in social work to arrange meetings in the villages.

Although most skill centres devote considerable resources to direct mobilization, sending out teams to visit villages and slums to convince prospective candidates and their families to join their courses, our research revealed that this method has been relatively ineffective. As Table 4.1 shows, the least number of respondents reported that they were recruited this way compared to other methods. The data shows that referral by family or friends (usually who had previously undergone similar training) was the most important information channel for students across all four centres. Several respondents revealed that they were influenced to join the course by positive changes they had seen in others who had pursued such training. The second most important source of information was advertisements circulated in social media, the Internet, and newspapers. Job fairs are another important site of recruitment for skill centres. Representatives of skill centres attend job fairs where they hand out flyers, make presentations, and contact job-seekers to explain the benefits of their courses. In addition, students are recruited through word-of-mouth and referrals by former students. No respondent had been informed about the course by NGOs or community-based organizations, although we had been told by managers that this is an important channel of recruitment. Almost all the trainees in the SM /AA cohorts learned about the course from friends or family members who had completed a course in the same centre:

> *My friend was an inspiration for me. My friend had completed just 10th standard and I was the one who told him to join skill training. He dresses well and talks in English also … Later, when I saw the change in him, I decided to come here.*

It is noteworthy that several respondents reported learning about the opportunity through an advertisement in a local newspaper that featured a popular Kannada actor.

Despite their concerted efforts to recruit students, skill centres experience high rates of attrition, both between recruitment and enrolment and in the first days or weeks of the programme. At one skill centre we were told that around 10 percent of new recruits drop out during the first week, due to 'fear', 'migration shock' or 'disinterest'. Consequently, much of the training is oriented to acclimatizing students to the urban environment and formal employment (see following section).

Table 4.1: Mode of recruitment to training programme

Method of recruitment/ source information about course	Number of students
Field mobilization	14
Local NGO, community organization	0
Advertisements	16
Referral by family/ friends	72

4.3.2 Course content and training practices

The organizations we studied offer training that is aimed at preparing students mainly for lower-end service sector employment, such as in direct and indirect sales, driving, beauty, administrative assistant, and back office customer support jobs (especially in domestic call centres), and it is in such jobs that graduates are mainly placed. For instance, Pragati offers courses such as Administrative Assistant (AA), Retail, Business Associate, Beautician, Guest Care (hospitality industry), and Bedside Assistant (healthcare industry), while Move-up (as a smaller and newer organization) offers fewer courses – Sales Management (SM), Driving, Beauty and Plumbing. SkillConnect, as an older and large organization with many centres across the country, offers training in a wide gamut of skills from construction and manufacturing to office and service sector jobs. At Move-up all the courses run for 100 days, while Pragati offers shorter courses and SkillConnect offers courses of varying lengths, depending on the skills to be imparted. Move-up's longer programmes reflect their conviction that much more needs to be taught than job-relevant skills. While Move-up has just two residential training centres in Bangalore offering all the courses, SkillConnect runs separate training centres for different skills such as beauty and auto service. Pragati too has several centres in Bengaluru as well as training centres in other towns of Karnataka and across India.

Although the different courses are supposed to be aimed at particular sectors and types of work, in some cases there is significant convergence in the course content and kind of training as well as overlap in terms of placements. For instance, organizations may offer separate courses in 'Administrative Assistant' and 'Sales Management' or 'Retail', their graduates are placed in broadly the same kinds of jobs (see section 3.4). Pragati's Admin Assistant course includes the following components:

Tally [accounting software]
Analytics
English conversation
Public speaking
Soft Skills
Computers
Life skills*
Values (topics covered included: Dignity of Labour, Success and Problems, Determination and Persistence, Faith)

But their Retail Sales course covers most of the same subjects:

Retail (topics covered included: Presentation Skills, Convincing the Customer, Handling Competition, Visual Merchandising, Customer Service)
English conversation
Public speaking
Soft skills
Computers
Life skills*
Values (topics same as above)

These similarities show that such training leads to jobs that do not really require job-specific skills, and also that the purpose is much broader than job training – rather, the aim is to impart communication skills such as spoken English and 'soft skills' such as self-discipline and time management that are thought to be necessary in the 'formal sector' workplace.

Leaders and staff of the skill centres we studied (especially Move-up) emphasized the transformative nature of their training, not just in terms of creating livelihoods but also new 'entrepreneurial subjects' (Gooptu 2009, 2013b; Upadhya 2018). Their purpose is not only to prepare students for the corporate workplace but also to change their 'mindset' and attitudes of students to help them become appropriate and successful corporate employees. Trainers recognize that new recruits (especially migrants from rural areas) face many challenges in adjusting to work in spaces that they may have never experiences, such as large retail stores and beauty parlours, hence discipline and time management are important watchwords in these programmes. Training is also explicitly oriented to helping students develop the ability and determination to persevere in an unaccustomed form of work and urban life. Thus, in addition to lessons in particular vocational skills (beautician, driving, sales, etc), all courses include components such as Spoken English, Digital Literacy and Numeracy, and especially 'Life Skills'.

Despite the emphasis during recruitment on 'raising aspirations', the first few days of training typically focus on 'expectation lowering'. While students come with high expectations about the kinds of jobs and salaries they will be able to access after training, they are now told that they are unlikely to get a 'good job' right away, given their limited or non-existent English proficiency and lack of work

experience. Trainers also counsel them that they can expect to learn only so much conversational English and computer skills through these short duration courses. Students are told that they must accept the job in which they are placed, even if the salary is low and the work tedious, in order to gain work experience as a stepping-stone to a better job.

Figure 4.3: Training in progress

At Move-up, the training programmes are designed to help students manage what they term 'migration shock' and 'workplace shock', which are viewed as major obstacles to their successful adjustment to the urban environment and corporate workplace. For instance, the skill centre environment is designed to simulate the workplace setting. Because it is a residential programme, students' activities and use of time can be closely regulated throughout the day. The training centres adhere to a strict and disciplined schedule which engages the students in classes and learning activities for nine hours a day, seven days a week (on Sunday there are some recreational activities), such that there is barely any free time. The day starts with Yoga and Meditation at 6 am, followed by a one-hour assembly where trainers and leaders give discourses on 'Values'. Classes begin after breakfast and run from 8 am to 1 pm and 2 to 7 pm. Evenings are for self-study and other organized activities.

According to staff members, getting used to such regimentation helps students transition into corporate jobs, where they would be required to work long hours, adhere to office timings, and exercise self-discipline, and where they would have limited control over their time. The head of Move-up stated explicitly that 'rural' youth need to be moulded into appropriate worker-subjects who are fit

for the kinds of jobs where they will be placed. To inculcate these habits, they teach time discipline, self-responsibility, and other 'life skills'. For example, time discipline is inculcated by meting out mock 'punishments' for arriving late to class, and students are constantly told that they must learn to manage their time (even as time discipline is imposed on them from outside). Trainers believe that these methods help students learn habits such as punctuality and discipline. Yet training centres control every moment of students' time, denying them the opportunity to learn to manage their own time.

Despite this strict regimentation and top-down learning environment, skill trainers at Move-up claim that their teaching methods are diametrically opposed to those used in regular schools and colleges. They stress that student participation in the class is actively elicited, learning is activity-based and enjoyable, students are encouraged to speak in English, engage in debates and so on. However, an HR manager who hires Pragati alumni said that while that students from poor backgrounds require one-on-one support and training, training centres use teaching methods no different from those in formal educational institutions in order to produce more 'output'. Hence the quality of their training has declined, in his view.

'Soft skills' training – a staple of the corporate world -- is meant to produce self-managing individualized workers who take responsibility for their own work and progress, i.e., for acquiring the marketable skills that will determine their own success or failure (Gooptu 2009; Upadhya 2016, 2018; Urciuoli 2008). In Bangalore training centres, such ideas are imparted through 'life skills' training, which is considered particularly important for students from rural and/or low-income families who are believed to lack the personal habits, psychological orientations and emotional maturity needed for modern urban life. Life Skills includes topics such as: 'The power of a positive attitude', 'Goal setting: Making it happen', 'Stress management' and 'Being a good team player'. The training particularly aims to change students' 'mindsets' to help them to succeed in the workplace, by emphasizing self-discipline, perseverance, stamina and 'grit'. Significantly, anger management is an important keyword in these programmes, as students are taught to swallow reprimands from the boss or customers' rude remarks in the interest of their 'careers'.

Although life skills training is meant to produce autonomous and self-drive worker-subjects, our observations of Bangalore training programmes suggest that they are oriented more to creating compliant workers who have just enough 'skills' and personal habits to fit into the corporate workplace. For instance, students are given detailed instructions on appropriate norms of behaviour and self-presentation – how to groom themselves and dress neatly, the importance of being punctual, the need to respect the boss and not talk back, to rein in one's emotions at work. Topics in Life Skills also include 'Hygiene and dress' and 'Workplace protocol'. Because skill centres know that newly placed workers often quit their jobs soon after joining, they devote considerable energy to preparing

them for work life in the service economy, moulding their attitudes and orientations and motivating them to persevere in the face of adversity, even when they find the work onerous or demeaning. They are given counselling on how to face job interviews and instructed on how to carry themselves in front of recruiters. In addition, students are counselled on career planning, which mainly consists of admonitions to have patience, to tolerate a low-paid and tedious job in the interest of longer-term career development. To motivate and inspire the trainees, successful alumni are brought in to share their stories – of starting out at a salary of Rs. 8000 and moving slowly into a good sales job earning Rs. 35,000 per month, or of making a move from an arduous outdoor sales job to an indoor desk job. The urban service economy is presented as a field of endless possibilities, in which anyone can succeed if they persevere and learn to bear hardships while looking out for the next opportunity.

Life Skills classes also include practical guidance to help student adjust to independent life in the city, such as on household budgeting, managing a bank account, and learning bus routes. Apart from classroom and practical teaching, students are given simple projects such as a visit to a BMTC bus terminal to purchase tickets, visiting bank branches, so on. Students (who may have never been exposed to these requirements of modern urban life) are even assisted with opening bank accounts and applying for PAN and Aadhar cards, if required. Thus, the Move-up programme aims to prepare students not only for the job but also generally to cope with their new lives in the city.

Despite these efforts at motivating students, Move-up leaders reported a dropout rate of at least 20 percent across the courses. The rate is lower for the Driving course because it provides hands-on experience and so is preferred by students for livelihood training. In contrast, training in other courses such as Sales Management is mostly conducted through theory classes, hence students are less likely to retain interest. For this reason, Move-up provides typing classes for the Sales Management cohort in order to enhance hands-on experience and thereby reduce the rate of attrition.

Gooptu (2009) has explored the extent to which neoliberal subjectivities have penetrated into the service economy, especially in relation to the increasing informality and insecurity of employment even in the 'organized' sector (Gooptu 2013b). She finds that the changing nature of service sector employment, particularly in retail, in the post-liberalization era is marked by an ethos of individualism, initiative, self-responsibility and enterprise, and she argues that workers must assimilate these orientations in order to succeed (cf. Maitra & Maitra 2015). As discussed in this section, training programmes are on the surface designed to inculcate 'neoliberal' values and orientations in service workers. Yet our research suggests that training programmes are oriented more to creating docile worker-subjects who accept the authority of managers and the drudgery, poor working conditions and low salaries of service sector jobs. Because training centres know that rural youth are more likely to be malleable and submissive, they focus on bringing young people from rural areas and equipping

them for work in the urban service economy. While claiming to mould the personalities and habits of trainees to help them succeed, training programmes are actually fine-tuned to the realities of the new service economy, which offers only insecure, low-paid jobs and virtually no career path (as discussed below). In this context, trainees are exhorted to stick with even stressful and dead-end jobs in the interest of long-term career development – a prospect that workers soon realize is quite unrealistic.

4.4 From training centre to workplace

The transition from training to the workplace proved to be difficult and, in some cases, impossible for many students. Despite training centres' efforts to prepare trainees to face the 'shocks' of working in a BPO unit, a retail store or a beauty parlour, they faced many issues after job placement, leading quite a few to quit and return to their places of origin or seek other jobs. And despite the centres' commitment to provide ongoing support services to new workers, these services were also found wanting. In this section we examine the difficulties faced by trainees in entering the services workforce and the reasons for high rates of attrition.

4.4.1 Expectations and experiences of training

In our interviews conducted with students during the training period, we asked them about their expectations of the programme and their aspirations, as we wanted to compare these responses with their actual experiences which we would record during post-placement and follow-up interviews. Given that many students joined training courses with expectations very different from the organizations' objectives, it is not surprising that we often found a mismatch between their expectations and their experiences of training, and hence a sense of discontent or disorientation after joining the course (and even more so, after getting placed in jobs).

For students of the Sales Management (SM), Retail and Administrative Assistant (AA) courses, English along with computer training were cited as attractive components of the course curricula which they heard about during mobilization drives. While most students of Pragati's Retail course mentioned a desire to improve their communication skills, especially in spoken English, as the main reason for taking up the course, most trainees in the sales course at Move-up mentioned computer training and placement in an 'office job' as their main motivations. *'Learning English and Computers will be useful for me to find an office job'*, said one trainee, echoing narratives aspirations of his other batchmates. Students of both centres were consistent in their articulation that the centres 'guarantee

a job' on successful completion of the course and cited this as an important motivation for taking up the course.

Several Move-up trainees who had completed their bachelor's degrees and were interested in pursuing driving were convinced by the faculty to take up the Sales Management course instead. They were told that learning to drive will not take long, and as they had higher degrees they should enrol for the SM course. Conversely, several students who aspired to join the SM course were redirected to Driving as they did not have good educational qualifications.

Most trainees in the Sales Management and Driving cohorts had expected only to improve their communication skills and 'learn computers', but the training exceeded their expectations as they learned additional skills such as in arithmetic and financial literacy, time management, life skills and yoga. A handful of students already had some experience working in tele-sales, while one had worked as a customer service executive in an Airtel office. All had been employed as 'off-roll' employees (so not entitled to the benefits given to regular employees), and they complained about the low salaries in those jobs, the absence of benefits such as PF and ESI, and the insecure nature of the employment. They hoped to get better jobs through the skill training centre, but their expectations were not met in most cases (as discussed further below). In contrast, most Beauty trainees had joined the course with the intention of starting a career in the industry:

> *I want to learn and make an identity for myself. This is my expectation. I am looking forward to work for a year and get experience. After that, I want to set up a parlour.*

Most students in the Auto Technician course articulated a passion for cars and motor bikes, and it was their desire to learn about the mechanics of vehicles that motivated them to join the course. As their educational qualifications would not lead to 'decent' white collar jobs, they had taken up this opportunity in the hope of landing jobs in automobile showrooms in Bangalore, which they believed would pay well. Several joined the course because they could see a 'future' in the automobile sector. Others had enrolled after having pursued or dropped out of courses in allied areas like ITI/Diploma in Mechanical or Electrical. They said that the course would help improve their understanding of automobiles, especially since practical training is an important component of the programme. Several said that they expected to do well in the on-the-job training component, which would help them build networks and seek full-time job opportunities. Trainers had built up the students' expectations, telling them that they would land good jobs if they performed well in classroom sessions as well as immersive training. Many students harboured aspirations of starting their own garages after gaining some work experience in the industry and were influenced to take up the course after learning that the centre

offers loans to interested alumni for starting their own enterprise. The following narratives reflect trainees' motivations for taking up the course:

> *I enquired about the possible courses I could take up to increase my skill sets. Also, I was interested in pursuing something related to automobiles. In my free time, my friends and I would detach and assemble parts of a Tempo Traveller, so I have always been interested in vehicles. A relative of mine had pursued this course earlier and he recommended it to me. He works at the Amba automobile showroom.*
>
> *In three or four years I want to become an owner of a garage or showroom. I heard that as part of this course, they will provide interest-free loans to the trainees who have completed two years working in showrooms or garages. I will see if I can avail of this.*

Most trainees were fairly positive about their experiences of skill training and believed that they had learned more than they had anticipated. Speaking about the relevance of the course, an automobile technician trainee observed:

> *This training will be useful even in the future. Given that the number of vehicles is increasing by the day, this field will always be relevant, but one has to keep himself abreast with new developments and technologies to be able to compete.*

However, several respondents expressed discontent about the course, for instance complaining that it was not sufficiently rigorous. An SM trainee said, *'I expected I would learn English communication, life skills, typing and other computer skills.* A few of the SM trainees felt that the course is more suitable for novices as it focuses on basic training in computers and English, while those with some work experience were not building the skills needed for higher level roles (such as learning Tally, the accounting software). Several trainees noted that the focus of training is on cracking interviews and said that such skills would not take them far. For instance, in the English class they learned about the pleasantries that they are expected to use in interactions but did not improve their grammar. In computer training, the focus is on typing and Notepad rather than skills such as Excel, PowerPoint and Tally which are valued in the job market. Further, several driver trainees were not satisfied with the training:

> *I have come to learn driving. I had not expected life skills, spoken English, digital literacy and other classes. They had told us they will give shampoo, soap, hair oil etc. We thought they*

would give those things for all three months, but they gave them only once and later asked us to buy with our own money. I used to wonder if I made a mistake by coming here.

While our respondents were overall fairly positive about the skill training they received and had high expectations of their future working lives, once they were placed in jobs and started working most became disillusioned, for several reasons: First, many students had expectations or ambitions that were far beyond what training centres were offering. In particular (as has been seen across India), many articulated a desire for a government job – especially those from rural areas. Their objective in taking up the course was to build skill sets that would place them in any kind of job temporarily to that they could earn some money, but their long-term goal was to get permanent positions (which generally means government jobs). Popular career aspirations mentioned by respondents included joining the police force, IAS /IPS, the armed forces, railways, banks and official jobs in panchayat or local bodies, in that order. While some planned to work while also preparing for competitive entrance exams (as they required the financial support), others were clear that they had joined a training programme only to improve their communication and other skills and planned to work towards their main goal – by taking preparatory courses for competitive exams, studying at home, etc) without earning. This underscores our finding – discussed in section 4 – that most trainees do not come from impoverished households, despite the intentions of training centres to cater to the poor.) The following excerpts from interviews illustrate these aspirations:

I have applied for the upcoming Police exam. In the question paper, three to four questions will be in English. Since I am from Kannada medium, I am not good in English. So, I have come here to learn English. I will work for six months to one year and use the earnings to join a coaching centre and then sit for the Police entrance exam.

Since I am better educated, learning English and Computers will be useful for me to find an office job. My plan is to find a good temporary job in Sales, so I will get time to study for competitive exams.

When interviewed during the training period, most students said that they would avail of the centre's placement service and would take up any job offered, but a few had other plans – to start their own enterprises or to apply for other kinds of jobs (especially permanent government jobs). Several trainees in the Sales Management and Admin Assistant courses had studied commerce, so wanted they wanted to build on that background by enrolling for skill training. They planned to pursue an MBA or write banking exams – career ambitions that are aligned to their education and training.

Most male trainees from urban areas said that as children their ambition was to study for professional degrees such as medicine, engineering or law, but they could not pursue their dreams because their parents were not in a position to support them financially, or felt they would not be able to cope with the pressures of such an education. Others articulated a desire to start their own businesses in the same field they were being trained in or a related area. When asked about their plans, several were even able to chart out a specific career path, such as:

> *After working for at least five years in a showroom I want to start my own garage. We have been told that if we learn all the concepts well and do good work at the showroom where we are initially placed, we will be able to get a good salary – even Rs.30,000 to Rs. 40,000. So, it depends a lot on us.*

Second, most trainees expressed a desire to support their families in the future, or to be able to save enough to construct a house and take care of parents when they are older. Common themes in the narratives of trainees from diverse backgrounds and across all courses was the desire to 'settle well' in life, support parents and younger siblings, and be in a position to buy assets such as land, a house and movable goods. These narratives point to an ambition to rise above their present circumstances and create a more promising future, and the training course was seen as a step in this direction. This desire was expressed especially by students from rural areas of north Karnataka, whose main objective in undertaking training was to get better jobs in Bangalore so that they could support their families or contribute to the education of a younger sibling or the medical needs of a parent. However, they were aware that the jobs in which they would be placed would likely be short-term and the pay insufficient to cover their needs; hence many expressed a desire to eventually return to their hometowns or villages:

> *I actually want to work in Hubli. It will be close to my house. I will be able to save on my food and accommodation. If I work in Bangalore, I can only send home Rs. 2500 per month. If I can work in Hubli, I can give Rs. 6000 every month to my family with Rs. 10,000 as salary.*

> *If I get a job back home, I will definitely go to Haveri. But there are no jobs at my place, so I will accept what I get in Bangalore. I will not be able to send home any money with Rs. 12,000. I can only manage living expenses with this amount*

The following quotes capture the anxiety of trainees from rural areas:

I would like to contribute to the family income, but with increasing prices I don't know if my salary will be enough to support my family in the future.

With 10,000 rupees as salary, and the PG [accommodation] *taking away 5,000, I don't know how I will manage.*

A student from a village in Kolar mentioned that he would like to work in Bangalore because of the higher compensation, but he planned to commute from his village every day – a long distance. Such respondents believed that they could save more if they stayed at home, and so would be able to contribute more to the family income. But several trainees were concerned that if they moved to their native places they would not have as many opportunities for career advancement as in Bangalore:

I want to work in Bangalore. We should not be in the same village and follow our father's occupation. There won't be problem there for basic necessities, but no one can perform a ceremony without taking loan. If we go out of our region and work, we will grow.

Another said:

I will pick the job in Bangalore. If I do the same work in my village, I won't get as much as I can earn in Bangalore. Only when we move out of the place and develop do we get respect.

While most trainees were aware that the jobs they would be offered would not provide them with the resources to rent a decent accommodation in the city and also support their families back home, some had chalked out plans to adapt to their situation. For instance:

Private employment is never long term, it is always short term. If I have free time, then I will do some other part-time work. I am learning Yoga here. I will get Yoga certificate if I pay Rs. 60. Then, with the certificate, I think I can get a part-time teaching job- I can perform the yoga and tell the benefits of asanas. I want a job in Bangalore. If I do the same work in my village, I will get less pay – only when we move out of the place and develop we get respect.

The theme of respect was echoed by several women who said that entering the workforce would not only make them financially independent and enable them to support their parents or children but would also enhance their 'value'. They clearly connected the ability to earn with a sense of self-worth. As one beautician trainee said:

I want to work and earn money because it makes me feel independent and valued, as I wouldn't have to ask my husband for everything – not that he doesn't take care of my needs. I want to become a politician like my father. This is my dream. But my husband is not interested in my dream.

Although training staff had made efforts to 'lower expectations', when they learned about the kinds of jobs and salaries they can expect, many students openly expressed disappointment. A placement officer remarked that students expect the salary level offered by 'Tier 1 companies' despite being 'good enough only for Tier 2 companies':

They expect to save a lot of money immediately, but they don't realize that in the first six months they need to focus on learning and growing. Later comes saving. They are already saving by being independent and not taking money from parents, but they don't think about this.

This remark displays a remarkable lack of sensitivity to the economic conditions and moral compulsions of rural students from modest backgrounds, most of whom agreed to join a training programme and work in Bangalore mainly because they wanted to support their families at home. Their training period in the city also represents a major opportunity cost for their parents, who must forego the money they might have earned if they were working.

4.4.2 Job placement

All the skill training centres we studied provide and even guarantee job placement for their graduates. To facilitate this, they have tie-ups with particular employers, called 'placement partners', which recruit their students regularly. Placements are almost exclusively located in Bangalore, but occasionally students are placed in other metro cities such as Hyderabad and Chennai. Placement officers said that they are also trying to find employment opportunities in regional cities and smaller towns because many students would prefer to work closer to their native places, but in our cohort all the placements were in Bangalore.

Retail and Sales Management graduates are placed in a wide range of jobs, from customer-facing retail sales jobs in department stores and supermarkets to back office service centres, call centres and fast food outlets. Companies where these students were placed included Food World, Health and Glow, Star Bazaar, Angadi Silks, Hatti Kaapi, Café Coffee Day, Kotak Mahindra, Angadi Silks, and Pantaloons. Graduates of the Administrative Assistant (AA) course are typically placed in tele-sales,

voice and non-voice processes in domestic BPOs, and clerical jobs; employers mentioned include Bharat Matrimony, First Source (a third-party call centre), and Concentrix. Beauty trainees are placed in the parlours of branded chains or stand-alone salons, while driving students are placed mainly with Bangalore-based on-call companies (as they are not eligible for a taxi licence until they complete one year with a regular driving license). Starting salaries offered were mostly in the range of Rs. 8000-12,000 for retail and back office jobs, Rs. 8000 for driving jobs, and as low as Rs. 6000 for beauticians.

Comprehensive data shared by Pragati on the placements of their alumni (AA and Retail courses) show a clear pattern, substantiating the complaints of students about the low-end jobs they are offered (Table 4.2). Most of the Pragati alumni were placed in third-party or captive call centres, with companies such as HDB Financial Services and Digicall. The other important employers for this cohort were from the retail sectors, including companies such as Shoppers Stop, Westside and Food World. A significant number of graduates (more than 10%) were self-employed, while about one-tenth of were hired by hospitality companies such as Café Coffee Day, Hatti Coffee and Chai Point.

Table 4.2: Pragati alumni placement data

Placements	**Number**
Back office/call centre/BPO	411
HDB Financial Services	136
First Source	81
Digicall	44
Others	150
Retail	256
Shoppers Stop	66
Tata Trent Limited (Westside)	63
Food World	27
Health & Glow	10
Others	90
Hospitality	111
Café Coffee Day	41
Hatti Coffee	39
Others	31
Self-employed	134

Other	199
Total	1111

Skill centres have dedicated teams to handle placements. Trainees are briefed in advance about the placement process, and some centres prepare students by conducting mock interviews. Potential employers are invited to the centres on 'placement day' to make presentations and conduct tests and interviews, and interviews are also conducted over the phone. Placement officers may listen in on phone interviews with recruiters and provide feedback so that students can improve their responses. Representatives of a particular company will often be on campus for the entire day, starting with an orientation session where HR team provides an overview of the company and the job profile for which they are recruiting. Then they administer an aptitude test to interested students (mainly English and math skills), followed by one-on-one or group interviews with the short-listed students. Some companies complete all the rounds on a single day, while others conduct a group discussion on campus and then call for individual interviews later date at their own premises.

Placement Day – a vignette

During a Placement Day at Move-up, 'Nidhi', the HR head for Karnataka of a large fashion retail chain, 'Panorama', spent the day at the centre. She first addressed the Sales Management students who had opted for placements, along with two trainers and the placement in-charge from the main office. After introducing herself, Nidhi asked how many of the students had heard of their company, and only four raised their hands. She presented an elaborate PowerPoint presentation about the company, the organization of the floor in multi-brand company like theirs, the job profile, and the career ladder. Nidhi explained that the job involves standing for nine hours a day, hence it is challenging and only 'passionate people' can do it. (She told us later that she emphasizes this point before they get to the interview stage, because they do not want to hire people who cannot cope with the working conditions.) Students looked disturbed when Nidhi explained that they will have to work on weekends and holidays, but she reassured them:

> *It will be fun working on festivals as they celebrate festivals in the store. The best performers will be rewarded and provided with vouchers.*

After explaining the difficult aspects of the job, she went on to stress that there is a lot of scope to 'grow'; she claimed that any Fashion Associate can become a departmental head or a manager with constant work and effort – claiming that only retail provides this kind of growth. Nidhi

emphasized that what they are offering is a 'permanent job' and that the employee will be on the company's payroll and not that of a third party (i.e., it would not be a contract job).

During and after the presentation, the students raised a number of questions – asking for clarifications about the exact nature of the work they would have to perform, whether they would have targets to meet, about the work timings, and so on. But the main questions were about salary. The first time someone asked about compensation, Nidhi replied, 'I thought you won't ask that. Any other questions?'. Students then asked about PF and other benefits. They were also concerned about whether they would have to speak in English. Nidhi said, *'The job requires you to speak in both Kannada and English. To move up to the level of Store Manager, Department Manager you need English'.* Finally coming to the compensation structure, Nidhi said that the cost to company (CTC) for entry-level employees is 1.5 lakhs per annum. Out of this, the employee gets Rs. 9,000 per month in hand plus 'incentives', which can range from Rs. 3000 to 5000 per month. Regarding other employment conditions, she said that the first six months is a probation period, and after that they will get appointment letters based on performance. They are entitled to 24 paid leave days a year as well as PF and ESI facility for themselves and dependent family members.

Students asked whether they would get an 'experience letter', which implies that they already expected to change jobs quickly. When one student asked what would be the minimum period of work required to get the experience letter, the Move-up placement representative was visibly embarrassed. Nidhi's response was oblique: *'We believe that passion plus hard work equals growth. We invest in you a lot, so we expect this.'* Rather than answering the question, she told the students what is expected of them.

Students were taken into another room for the written aptitude test, in MCQ format, which included questions on basic math and English. They were anxious about the test, but it seemed that more weight was given to the interview. The one-on-one interviews tested them mainly on their English communication skills. The placement process took up the entire day, as almost 20 students were interviewed. After the interviews were over late in the evening, Nidhi addressed the students again and thanked them for attending. She told the trainer than she needs some time to go through the written scores and tabulate them with the interview scores, and would convey the list of selected students at a later date. The students, who were eagerly waiting for results, were disappointed. But when we spoke with students after the session, they did not seem very enthusiastic about working for this company.

Employers' perspectives

As noted above, training centres have placement partners, which recruit regularly from them. Interviews with HR managers of these employing companies as well as skill centre representatives suggested that cultivating this relationship is crucial in finding placements for their graduates. One reason is that many employers (especially in retail, BPOs, etc) hire in bulk and so generally use other methods, such as employee referrals, walk-in interviews and job fairs, which yield larger numbers. In addition, most employers do not find much advantage in hiring 'trained' workers. An HR manager in a large fashion chain said:

> *We will be mostly hiring freshers from the skill centres. They would not have any exposure to retail. They will only have theoretical knowledge, so a lot of our investment goes into training these guys and making sure that they are happy at the workplace. It is easy to say that I am willing to stand for nine hours, but when you get into the shoes it gets difficult because it is a reality check. So, we have to invest a lot of time in them and make sure they are taking the right direction. But an experienced person knows what needs to be done. So that way it is a little challenging for us* [to hire from skill centres].

Another HR manager complained that it is very hard to find workers with adequate knowledge of spoken English – there is always a 'gap' between what they need and the workers available. Despite this, they do not hire many workers from training centres such as Pragati; most of their hires are walk-ins or through employee referrals. She also said that there is no difference between workers who have been 'trained' at skill centres and others – although they have a bit more confidence they still need to be trained by the company.

However, the HR manager of the Bangalore call centre of a large matrimonial service company, which has a tie-up with Move-up as well as Pragati, felt that hiring graduates from these NGOs has some advantages:

> *When I get people from Move-up, Pragati and other such centres, they have been trained for three months in life skills and all. The employees undergo a training programme of one week after getting hired, which will teach them about the product. But in that one week their attitude like confidence cannot be built. That is something that has to be there. So, when I get students from centres like Move-up, they will have those things. It is an advantage actually.*

Other employers stated that they prefer students from skill training NGOs because they are more likely to be in need of a job and so will be 'loyal'. Given that most service sector organizations struggle with high attrition rates, finding workers who will stick to the job is a priority (in this company,

the attrition rate within the first three months is 30%, and at entry level overall, 20%). One HR manager pointed out that they are expanding rapidly, hence hire round the year. While the intake varies from region to region, in Bangalore they take in some 40-50 new employees per month. When asked what qualities they look for in the candidates, he said that it is not easy to find the right people:

> *We look at candidates who speak with confidence. We are not looking for someone who is a hundred percent fit, but somebody who is good enough, who has got the right attitude, who is trainable, who we can mould.*

His colleague explained further:

> *We have certain assessments* [during interviews] – *we evaluate their family background and come to know how much they need the job. We ask about their parents' jobs and their salaries. Somebody who is coming after their graduation for a salary of Rs. 12,000, if they have commitments, they will be eager to earn more money.*
>
> *If someone comes during his summer holidays or looking for part-time work, we do not employ them. Since we train them here, a lot of cost goes into it. If there is someone who does not have any financial burden on them, they might shift the job in one month. We have seen those things in the past. So, we try to find out why they want the job, how much they are contributing to their families, have they come to Bangalore because they need to work?*

Elaborating on this point, this HR executive said that they might prefer a person with average skills who is very motivated to work over another candidate who might be very good in communication skills and so on, but does not seem likely to stick to the job: *'I would want to look at people who would want to make their career, rather than coming here for few bucks.'* When we probed this point, he confirmed that they prefer to hire from 'foundations' because they train *'people from poor backgrounds'* who have *'an intention, passion and desire to work - they have the fire in the belly'*.

Rural youth from poor backgrounds also suit the needs of industry because they find it difficult to hire people from Bangalore:

> *Earlier we have faced the problem for hiring telemarketing executives. For these roles, nobody wants to continue for a longer period, plus they don't want to join domestic call centres. One of the challenges is that Bangalore is a metropolitan city. About 60 percent of people in Bangalore are non-Kannadigas. We have candidates who come from every part of India, but they do not know Kannada. Even though they are good we cannot hire them for local*

processes. Those challenges might not be found in Hyderabad, Kerala or Chennai which has regional language people.

Thus, skill centres cater to the requirements of corporate service sector companies by bringing youth from rural areas and moulding them into potential workers. While they do endeavour to place students in well-paid, secure jobs, for fresh graduates most of the placement partners offer contractual jobs with low salaries and few benefits. Skill centres encourage students to take whatever offers they get, because being from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds they cannot expect to get plum jobs at first. Students are assured that after gaining some work experience and improving their spoken English, they will be able to move on to better jobs. Indeed, strategically hopping from one company to another is often presented as a path to career growth.

Figure 4.4: Job advertisement hoarding at a job fair

4.5 Following mobile workers: Aspirations, anxieties and attrition

To track what happens to trainees after they enter the job market, we conducted follow-up interviews (to the extent possible) with respondents in the sales, admin assistant, beauty and driving courses (but not auto mechanics) over a period of a year, starting almost immediately after placement and then at intervals of one to three months. While several trainees did not take up the job offered to them during placements, others had joined but then quit very soon due to inadequate compensation or strenuous work conditions. This made it difficult to conduct regular follow-up interviews as planned in the research design.

We were not able to collect information from all the 64 trainees in our sub-sample, as once they had changed jobs, we could not reach them on the phone numbers they had shared. In the end,

we were able to contact (or get information on) all but ten students at least once, giving a total sample of 54. In many cases, respondents were not traceable even after a few weeks, and very few could be contacted after six months, as they had changed jobs, moved out of Bangalore, or changed their phone numbers. Many did not pick up the call or return calls as promised, and organizing face-to-face interviews was virtually impossible despite our best efforts. Consequently, our information on students' post-training work experiences is not as robust as we had hoped.

The difficulties we faced in following our cohort of trainees into the job market illustrates the 'footloose', mobile, and precarious nature of the urban service workforce. This conclusion is supported by the data we were able to collect. We tabulated information gained from the last successful follow-up interview, which ranged from three to six months after placement Of those we could contact, many had left Bangalore (Table 4.3), and very few were still in the jobs in which they had been placed. However, of those we were able to contact, around 44 percent were engaged in occupations related to the field in which they were trained and 20 percent were in other kinds of jobs (Table 4.4). Only 20 percent of the driver trainees were employed as drivers. A significant number of trainees – one-fourth – were unemployed when we followed up with them, while three were studying.

Table 4.3: Expected location of employment (stated during initial interview), and actual location after training (follow-up interview)

	Course			
Expected location of employment	**Sales / Admin Assistant**	**Driving**	**Beauty**	**All**
Bangalore	13	7	24	26
Home town or district	6	2	2	6
Other	1	1	2	5
NA	0	0	6	2
Actual location 3-6 months post-training				
Bangalore	11	2	23	36
Home town or district	8	7	4	19
Other	0	0	0	0
No information	1	1	7	9

Table 4.4: Expected and actual employment and salary, post-training

Course	Expected employment	Number of respondents	Actual employment status	Number of respondents	Expected salary per month	Number of respondents	Post training salary	Number of respondents
SM/Admin Asst	Office job/ retail job offered by training center	13	Working in job in field related to training	8	Rs. 5000-10,000	6	Rs. 5000-10,000	3
	Bank/gov't job	3	Job in unrelated field	5	Rs. 11,000-19,000	9	Rs. 11,000-19,000	7
	Others (business/ any job)	4	Unemployed	3	No particular expectation	1	Unemployed	3
			Studying	4			Family business	1
			Not interested in working	0			Working without salary/interning	4
Beauty			No information	1			No information	2
	Beauty salon/offered by centre	22	Working in job in field related to training	16	Less than Rs.5000	0	Less than Rs. 5000	2
	Others (own parlour/only for learning/continue studies)	6	Job in unrelated field	3	Rs. 5000-10,000	14	Rs. 5000-10,000	7
			Unemployed/ not interested in working	9	Rs. 11,000-19,000	9	Rs. 11,000-19,000	4
			No information	10				
Driving	Driving job offered by centre	8	Working in job in field related to training	2	Rs. 5000-10,000	4	Rs. 5000-10,000	1
	Others (any job/office job/business)	2	Job in unrelated field	4	Rs. 11,000-19,000	5	Rs. 11,000-19,000	4
			Unemployed	3				

	Studying	0				
	Not interested in working	0				
	No information	1				

Follow-up interviews revealed disappointment with their jobs and unhappiness with the role of skill training centres, in many cases. Several Move-up graduates were especially critical, as they had been placed in a call centre that had promised a higher salary during their interviews, only to find out after joining that they had to undergo a probation period of a few months, during which they would be paid much less. Even after completing the probation period, they were not paid full compensation – the company said it was going through a financial crunch. Consequently, all those respondents had quit the job. Despite these issues, centres like Pragati and Move-up continue to associate with such companies for placements. Speaking about her experience a trainee said, *'Who will work in these bad jobs? We could have stayed back in our native and found a job close by'.*

Trainees who had some prior experience, especially those enrolled in the Administrative Assistant course at Pragati, expected to be placed in jobs in BPOs where they would work on insurance claims, document verification, and other such administrative support operations. They were disappointed when most placements were with domestic call centres. A trainee observed:

> *What hurt me about Pragati was that they are providing only voice-based jobs. There are many who have degrees and they can definitely be given non-voice jobs. They are also giving Rs. 7000 to 8000 which is very cheap. With a degree they should get at least Rs. 12,000 in hand. They are sending them all to call centres, I don't know what's the use of sending them to call centres. I feel they are forcing them into it.*

Several beauty trainees also reported negative experiences, such as when they were asked to clean the parlours or were paid less than what was initially offered (see section 7.1).

When asked about the usefulness of the training in their jobs, one student responded, *'We learnt a few things - that is it. It has not helped us much at work'.* Students were also frustrated with the lack of post-training support from the centres. One respondent said:

My self-confidence completely came down after I approached Pragati and trainer X scolded me for leaving the job- I left the centre in tears. I am disappointed with the centre for not keeping up their promise of providing a good job.

Overall, many respondents were unhappy with their job placements, which is a major reason they did not stay for long in the job. In fact, a number of students had quit within the first two weeks of employment. The common reasons for leaving were low or irregular salaries, especially to cover the costs of living in the city. A Move-up graduate who was placed in a third-party call centre said:

I pay Rs. 4500 for my PG, but I will only be paid Rs. 2000 for the training period of one month, after which I will get Rs. 8500 as salary. How will I pay the rent? Move-up says they will find me a different place, but with this low salary, how can I survive?

Similar stories were told by many other students as well.

4.5.1 A peripatetic workforce

The mismatch between students' aspirations or expectations and what they experienced after they joined the workforce largely account for the high rate of attrition. First, there is a clear disconnect between the expectations of trainees, their skill sets and the training they receive, and the kinds of jobs they can actually get in Bangalore. As one placement officer said:

The starting level of my students is really very low. So, making them improve so much in three months is really difficult. There are thousands of graduates who pass out every year from colleges in Bangalore which are English medium. Matching up to them is difficult … They don't realize that we can teach them basic computers, but not enough to get a job where you are working just on computer. So, Sales Management students get retail jobs, or work in BPOs in tele-calling or data entry … Students want bank jobs, but again the role will be telemarketing etc … As time goes on, they realize that it's not easy to get jobs. Their self-esteem and confidence go down.

Such narratives suggest that the training centres attempt to place disadvantaged youth in jobs that do not meet their expectations, and also that they are not able to provide students with the skills needed to get the kinds of jobs they desire.

Second, many students enter training programmes for reasons very different from the stated aims of the centres. As noted earlier, several respondents articulated future plans that did not include

service sector employment in Bangalore – for example, they wanted to study for a higher degree such as B.Com. or MBA and then become an accountant or an HR manager in the corporate sector; to write a banking exam and get a government job; or open a shop in their hometown. Several students whose families own land in their native villages said that they want to return home after working for a few years and continue in agriculture, after saving enough money to dig a borewell or buy a specific piece of farming equipment. Driving students articulated ambitions such as buying a car on loan and operating a taxi in their hometowns. Thus, many students view these jobs as temporary roles, which they take on only to help them achieve other goals. For many, the purpose of undertaking training was not to develop careers in the service sector in Bangalore, but to gain some work experience, improve their English and communication skills, and save some money – all in pursuit of their actual dreams. The chance to learn English and computers in particular was presented by many students as the main reason for enrolling in the course. Significantly, all our respondents felt that proficiency in English is essential for them in their future careers and lives, regardless of how they envisioned their futures.

Interviews with sales management and admin assistant students in particular revealed that most do not aspire for the kind of employment which is on offer, which is mainly in domestic call centres or retail sales. A few students did not even participate in the placement process, saying that they had come just for the English and computer training and would seek jobs on their own or continue their education. Among those who participated in placements, there was a clear hierarchy of preference within the broad category of back office/ sales jobs: tele-sales and BPO are more desirable than direct sales or retail (working on the shop floor or outdoor sales jobs), although the latter often pay as much, if not more. Domestic call centre jobs are also more attractive because they can perform their work mainly in their own languages. Skill centre staff believe that this preference stems from the prestige associated with a job in which one could sit at a desk in an air-conditioned office, working with a computer, compared to jobs where one has to stand on one's feet all day and interact with customers face-to-face. Respondents also noted that their 'reputation' back home is a major concern. They are happy to work in Kotak Mahindra's BPO because they could tell their families that they have a bank job, whereas working at an international shoe store in a fancy mall is still viewed as selling shoes. But many trainees ended up in customer-facing roles rather than 'office jobs', adding to their disappointment.

Third, the jobs in which students were placed offered salaries below their expectations, with a typical starting salary of just Rs.7000 up to 14,000 per month. Most trainees who had quit their jobs cited low compensation as the most important reason, showing that there was a mismatch between their expectations and what the training centres were able to provide. The head of one training centre

pointed out that students are aware that they could earn more working even in an unskilled construction job, and so they find the pay quite inadequate. As staff member noted: '*After you finish beautician training, out of a batch of 30 only three will get Rs. 10,000, and 27 will get Rs. 5000 per month, if that. They will be taken as a helper in a beauty parlour'.*

The HR manager of a matrimonial service claimed that their telesales executives can earn Rs. 25,000-30,000 if they '*do 150 percent of their numbers'* (i.e., achieve over the given targets). In such sales jobs, compensation is based on the number of sales as well as the total revenue generated: '*Here we want people to earn more money, that is the reason we do not have any cap on incentives, so tele-marketing executives can make more money'.* In addition, this company has an employee referral scheme in which an employee gets Rs. 1250 for each referral if the new hire remains with the company for three months. While the jobs offered by this company appeared attractive, this was not the case for other back office/ call centre jobs. Thus, there is a major discrepancy between trainees' expectations, especially in terms of income (and what they were perhaps promised during mobilization) and what they can actually earn in Bangalore (Table 4.4). As the head of one centre noted, *"The fundamental problem is the understanding of wage levels'.*

Several trainees from rural backgrounds had returned to their hometowns because they could not afford accommodation in Bangalore (Table 4.3). Of the driving batch, fully 70 percent had returned to their hometowns after training. This was because they had not yet received their driving licenses, although they had been promised them, and they could not afford to live in Bangalore while waiting. In contrast, 40 percent of SM/ AA trainees had returned to their home towns or districts – to work either there or in another city nearby, to look for jobs, or to pursue other ambitions.

While skill centres claim to provide full support in job placements and follow-up to support trainees as they move into the workforce, several auto technician trainees from SkillConnect and several Move-up students said that they had been told that getting a job depended on them and their ability to convince interviewers about their competence. This suggests that the responsibility was shifted on to the trainees, despite the fact that trainees were recruited in part by assuring them of jobs upon successful completion of the course. Others were told by trainers that they would not be able to offer jobs as per their expectations, especially those with work experience. One student observed, '*They made it clear that they might not be able to provide jobs to my satisfaction and expectation, but at the end of the day definitely they will provide us with a job'.*

Discontent was especially seen amongst those who had worked previously and had enrolled for the course with the objective of landing a better job or getting an increment. One such trainee complained that he felt he would have been better off without the training. as he lost time and money

in doing the course and still ended up with a low-paying job: *'Move-up training was a waste of time; I could have earned Rs. 45,000 in the three months I spent there'.*

Of the 54 trainees with whom we were able to do follow-up interviews, graduates of SM/AA courses were earning more than their counterparts in other courses. About 60 percent of these trainees said they were earning between Rs. 8500 and Rs.14,500. Several of the beauty trainees were either interning without pay or were getting less than Rs. 5000, which is very little in an expensive city like Bangalore. Driver trainees, most of whom had returned to their villages because they had not gotten their licenses, were mostly unemployed or working in other jobs. For the Beauty trainees, we were unable to contact ten of the 34 in the cohort; of the 24 we could contact, 16 were working in beauty parlours and nine were unemployed (Table 4.4).

Low retention (i.e., high attrition) rates indicate a severe lack of job satisfaction, which stems from the reasons cited above. Overall, working conditions in the new service economy are marked by low pay and poor or no benefits, job insecurity, and lack of a career path. Added to this are the difficult living conditions in Bangalore, especially the problem of finding affordable and adequate housing near one's place of work, and the high cost of living and transportation. Housing was a major issue for migrants in particular, who wanted to save some of their earnings to send home but found their salaries eaten up with these daily expenses.

In addition, of the students we interviewed who come from provincial towns or villages, a large proportion said that had there been jobs in their hometowns they would have preferred to live and work there. Living in a metropolitan city is by no means perceived as desirable – contrary to popular ideas about rural youth being drawn to the cities. Skill training centres try to place their students in jobs in metro cities because they believe that there are not enough suitable opportunities elsewhere. This is particularly true for Move-up, whose leaders come from the corporate sector and who are convinced that the route to social mobility is via 'formal' employment in large cities (see section 4.2). Leaders and staff members of the other centres similarly believe that their students would have much better opportunities for advancement in a metro city compared to a small city – apparently regardless of the quality of the jobs available.

However, this level of staff turnover is typical of service industries in general, and the high rate of attrition was mentioned as a major problem by both training centre staff and HR managers. The CEO of one centre told us that placing students in jobs was the easy part, while retaining them in these jobs was the challenge. Staff at Move-up said that their overall three-month retention rate (an important parameter for funding agencies) was 54 per cent for sales jobs, 46 per cent for beauty, and 42 per cent for driving.

In the context of a high demand for personnel and a highly fluid and mobile labour force, training centres try to impress on their students the importance of staying in the job for at least in the initial period: *'We want the students to stay in the job, because we believe that that's the first step. In fact, the idea is not employment in the same profession they are trained in, the objective is continuous employment'.* At the same time, skill centre personnel said that they do not expect most students to stay in the same job for more than three to six months. Indeed, students were advised that they could grow in their careers only by moving from one company to another. Thus, although skills centres emphasize the need to motivate workers to 'persevere', they also cater to or replicate the requirements of the service industries for a 'flexible', non-permanent but constantly replenished workforce.

Skill training personnel acknowledge that new workers face several challenges in adjusting to corporate sector employment in Bangalore, including finding housing, sustaining oneself in the first month (before the first salary is paid), loss of confidence in encountering colleagues who speak better English, alienation in a strange city, and so on. Consequently, they have devised various strategies to try to ensure that students stay in the job or at least stay employed in Bangalore. One centre goes to the extent of retaining students' original SSLC/PUC/degree certificates or mark cards (collected at the time of admission) until they have worked for three months in the job in which they were placed, in order to discourage them from quitting. This emphasis on three months' retention is mainly because skill organizations receive placement fees from the employing companies only after the candidate stays in the job for three months. If they quit before that time, they are expected to pay Rs. 3000 (the amount the centre would have received from the employer) to retrieve their certificates. Further, successful placement and retention are requirements of most funding agencies as well as government programmes such as the PMKVY – skill centres can claim reimbursement for training only for students who are placed and stay in the job for a specified period of time.

To support students after placement and encourage them to stay employed, Move-up runs a helpline to mentor alumni as they struggle in their first jobs, look for other jobs, or face issues relating to housing, healthcare and finance. Through this outreach system they carry out extensive follow-ups to track their alumni into the workforce, calling each placed student on their first day of work, after the first week, and at the end of the first month. Having identified housing and living expenses during the initial period of employment as major problems faced by new workers, Move-up also partners with landlords and PG owners to provide housing without charging advance rent. Because the salaries that are paid during apprenticeship, internship, or on-the-job training are insufficient to survive in the city, the organization is also planning to enter into partnership with finance companies to provide short-term loans for new employees. Nonetheless, as we have seen, many of the Move-up cohort had left their jobs, returned home, and fallen out of touch with the organization.

Although most skill training centres do make such efforts to follow up and support their graduates, overall we found follow-up to be wanting. One reason for this is that skill training has largely become a 'numbers game', in which centres are under pressure to produce outputs but not to ensure that they are well settled in jobs. The HR head of a high-end chain of silk stores, which regularly recruited from Pragati and Move-up, observed that the quality of their students has been declining over time. He pointed out that training centres focus on skilling the maximum number of individuals because of the requirements of CSR funding, which has become an important source of support for them. Because they have to meet the targets set by their sponsors, quality is being sacrificed to quantity, he felt. For this reason, his company had stopped recruiting from Pragati.

4.5.2 Sociality at work

Although the follow-up mechanisms of skill training centres are often inadequate, they do give young people access to valuable peer networks that provide some social support. When one joins a skill training centre, one becomes part of a cohort, and usually a few people from one's cohort are placed in the same company. The students we met seemed to gain a lot of confidence from the fact that they would be working with friends. Classmates placed in the same company tried to find accommodation together, and they felt more secure knowing that they had someone with whom to navigate the city and the workplace. Students also had access to the network of previous students from that centre who were working in a range of companies. Indeed, skill training centres themselves often put fresh graduates in contact with alumni working in the same company, to provide them with a support system.

Peer networks appear to play a key role in guiding students' decisions regarding which job to take and how long to stick to the job. Skill training staff and HR managers gave us several examples of people who turned down better paying jobs just to be able to work in the same company as a friend. We were also told that if a group of friends were employed in the same company, they were more likely to stick to the job for a longer time. The flip side is that if one member in a group of friends quit the job, the entire group was likely to quit too. As the HR manager of a matrimony portal said:

> *When people come in as a group of three or four people leave the entire group also leaves. That is the reason why we generally don't select huge numbers from a single batch. If two employees know of a better offer, the entire group shifts.*

These peer networks provide some support for migrant workers, newly thrown onto the job market. During follow-ups these networks also helped us trace students who we were not able to contact. The

significance of new forms of sociality within what are otherwise alienating and intimidating environments requires further exploration.

4.6 Conclusion: What do skill training organizations actually do?

Based on her work with training and placement agencies working with manufacturing industries, Ruthven (2018) found that skill training programmes are really not so much about skill development; rather, they offer ways for employers to secure a constant flow of casual workers and also tie them to the company, 'thereby stabilizing their workforce in an era where the "permanent worker" is no longer an acceptable or viable category' (2018: 315). Her study, like this one, highlights the 'disconnect between the declared intent of government "skills" policy and the way in which it is actually realized, from the viewpoint of employer, student and vocational training provider' (2018: 315).

In our study, interviews with service sector employers – especially in the transport, retail and BPO industries – show that they struggle to find enough people from Bangalore who are willing to work for the salaries they pay. For job roles such as driver, administrative assistant, tele-sales and retail sales, starting salaries range from 6,000 to 13,000 rupees. Therefore, they actively seek employees who come from smaller cities, towns and villages (who might have lower expectations). Skill training centres appear to play a major role in facilitating this flow of labour and thereby in shaping the service workforce. Many of the students who were mobilized from rural areas would probably not otherwise have come to Bangalore to seek work. Even students from outside Bangalore who join skill training centres on their own – for instance, having been referred by a friend or relative, or after seeing a newspaper advertisement – might not have considered moving to Bangalore for work had there not been a skill training centre that promised to train them and find them a job.

The role of skill centres as labour brokers is indicated by their tie-ups with particular companies as 'placement partners'. Because of CSR rules, the companies that provide CSR funding are not allowed to recruit from the same centre that they support, yet they may benefit indirectly. For example, a company that is the 'Knowledge Partner' for the beautician course at SkillConnect, provides beauty lab infrastructure and curriculum and their own products for use in the training programme. The trainees are not employed directly by this company, but it is expected that the trainees will become unofficial 'ambassadors' for the brand once they start working in beauty salons. Thus, while there is no straightforward connection between CSR support and a particular company's labour requirement, overall skill centres help to create and mould the service sector workforce that is required by the growing corporate sector service economy in Bangalore.

In this sense, training centres – NGOs as well as for-profit companies – can be said to serve as 'labour brokers' by sourcing potential workers, providing some basic training in English and a few

job-oriented skills as well as orientation to 'formal sector work', and then placing them in jobs. In this way, they help to create a large pool of presumably willing and 'skilled' workers – especially those from rural areas and disadvantaged urban backgrounds who are willing to work in onerous conditions and for inadequate salaries. The mobilization of rural youth to fill jobs in the burgeoning urban service economy – jobs that are essentially unregulated, low-paying and insecure – raises multiple questions about India's current economic and urban policies as well as policies and programmes for skill development.

Section 5. Social Profile of New Service Workers

In this section we provide an overview of the social profile of students of the Bangalore training centres. The data are compiled from the cohort of students we interviewed (total = 103) at the four centres that participated in the study. Students were interviewed both during training period and after job placement (see section 1.2 on methodology). Twenty respondents were enrolled in courses leading to back office or retail sales jobs (Sales Management/ Retail/ Admin Assistant) of Move-up and Pragati, 34 in Beauty courses of Move-up. SkillConnect and Allure, ten in Move-up's driving course, and 39 in an Automobile Technician course run by SkillConnect. We were able to conduct follow-up interviews with respondents from the Sales/ Admin Assistant, Beauty and Driving courses of Move-up, Pragati and SkillConnect, but were not able to follow up the Auto Technician trainees. The unevenness in the composition of this cohort, in terms of type of course, stemmed from problems of access and availability of respondents, as explained in section 1.2.

In addition to information gathered directly through interviews with students, Pragati provided data on all their alumni of the Admin Assistant and Retail Sales courses, with 1111 records in total. In the following sections we present this data as well, which gives a more comprehensive picture of the social profile of trainees.

5.1 Gender and age

Overall, two-thirds of our student respondents were male and one-third female (see Table 5.1). This imbalance may reflect the difficulty of mobilizing young women to join training programmes or the reluctance of their families to send them for training, but more likely it is an artefact of how the cohort was constructed, which is weighted heavily in favour of males because of the large number of trainees in the auto repair course (all males). If we remove this group, 37 out of a total of 64 respondents were women, or more than half of the respondents. However, we did make a deliberate attempt to include equal numbers of male and female respondents, perhaps skewing the sample in the other direction, so this gender break-up cannot be taken as representative of the larger universe. Primary data collected from the training centres shows that both women and men enter training in large numbers, but the balance is determined by what kinds of courses are offered by a particular centre. Students in courses such as driving and plumbing are entirely male, while there are fewer courses, such as beautician training, that attract mainly women. Table 5.2 presents the gender breakup of the large sample of Pragati alumni, which shows that male students outnumber women.

Table 5.1: Age and gender of trainee cohort, by course

Course	Age group			
	18-25		26-30	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sales / Admin Assistant	14	4	2	0
Driving	9	0	1	0
Beauty	1	24	0	9
Auto Service Technician	38	0	1	0
TOTAL	62	28	4	9

Table 5.2: Gender break-up of Pragati alumni

Male	736
Female	375
Total	1111

The distribution of male and female trainees into different courses shows that work continues to be highly gendered in the service sector – whether because of biases of the training organizations or of trainees themselves. For instance, all but one of the 34 beauty trainees were women. Similarly, all the driver and auto technician students in our cohort were men. However, some domains such as retail sales and admin assistant attract both genders – although in those courses more than three-fourths of students were male in our cohort (compared to two-thirds of the Pragati alumni, also all from Sale and AA courses).

Not surprisingly, given the focus of skill training centres on imparting skills to the youth, most of the cohort were in the age group of 18 to 25 years. Only about 10 percent of the trainees were older, with most in this category in the beautician courses. Of these, several women were entering the workforce for the first time after marriage by taking up skill training (see section 7.1 for more details).

5.2 Place of origin and migration

As noted above, skill centres in Bangalore recruit from the city as well as from other areas of Karnataka and other states. Given that one aim of the study was to examine linkages between migration and employment in the urban service economy, we have tried to discern connections between students' place of origin and the type of training and job placement they receive.

Tables 5.3 through 5.5 present information on the mode of recruitment and the place of origin and mother tongue of the students, by organization and course. Around 45 percent of all students were from rural areas. In terms of place of origin, 30 percent were from Bangalore or other cities of Karnataka, and 21 percent from villages or small towns of northern Karnataka. However, given our small sample size and case study approach, these findings are more an artefact of the selection of training centres rather than indicative of a larger pattern. Move-up places particular emphasis on recruiting students from backwards districts and rural areas, and they facilitate urban migration by running only residential courses in Bangalore. This policy is reflected in the data on place of origin of Move-up students, most of whom come from rural areas (Table 5.3). In contrast, Pragati and SkillConnect have centres across the country and so do not bring many students from outside the city for training. Most of the trainees in the Beauty batches of SkillConnect and Allure were recruited locally, whereas many in the SM/ Admin Assistant and Driving courses of Move-up and Pragati came from rural areas. Most of the Beauty and Auto technician students were from urban areas, with almost half the trainees in the former group and most from the latter being from Bangalore. Both SM/ Retail and Driving sections had high representation from rural areas of north Karnataka, a region that suffers from socio-economic disadvantages due to agrarian distress and poor penetration of public infrastructure and services (see section 6). But southern Karnataka contributed an equal number of migrant trainees to the cohort, and a significant number (18) also came from other states (Table 5.4). Table 5.5 shows that the majority of trainees are Kannada speakers (so from Karnataka).

The Pragati alumni data shows that 44% came from districts of Karnataka other than Bangalore, followed by Bangalore (22%), Andhra Pradesh (20%), and a few from other states such as Tamil Nadu, Jammu & Kashmir and Odisha (Table 5.6).

Table 5.3: Rural/ urban origin of student cohort, by organization and type of training

Organization /course	Place of origin: rural	Place of origin: urban	Total
Move-up:			
Driving	9	1	10
Beauty	8	1	9
Sales Management	9	1	10
Pragati:			
Administrative Assistant	4	1	5
Retail	1	4	5
SkillConnect			
Beauty	1	18	19
Auto Service Technician	15	24	39
Allure Academy - Beautician	0	6	6
TOTAL	**47**	**56**	**103**

Table 5.4: Place of origin, by type of course

	Place of origin of respondent				
Course	**Bangalore city**	**Other KA cities**	**Northern KA - rural or regional town**	**Southern/ coastal KA - rural or regional town**	**Other states**
Sales / Admin Assistant	2	2	8	6	2
Driving	0	1	5	3	1
Beauty	16	3	5	5	5
Auto Service Technician	11	6	4	8	10
TOTAL	29	12	22	22	18

Table 5.5: Mother tongue, by type of course

	Mother tongue of respondent					
Course	**Kannada**	**Telugu**	**Tamil**	**Urdu**	**Malayalam**	**Other**
Sales / Admin Assistant	16	1	1	1	0	1
Driving	7	1	0	1	0	1
Beauty	14	6	3	8	0	3
Auto Service Technician	15	6	7	4	4	3
TOTAL	52	14	11	14	4	8

Table 5.6: Pragati alumni - place of origin

Place of origin	Number	Percent
Bangalore	241	21.7
Karnataka (except Bangalore)	490	44.1
Andhra Pradesh	218	19.6
Tamil Nadu	50	4.5
Kerala	16	1.4
Jammu and Kashmir	36	3.2
Odisha	21	1.9
Madhya Pradesh	9	0.8
West Bengal	8	0.7
Other	22	1.9
TOTAL	1111	100

5.3 Socio-economic status of households

As noted above, NGOs such as Move-up aim to help underprivileged youth – especially rural youth – by providing them with urban employment opportunities. For this reason, they try to limit their recruitment to youth from 'poor families', which they identify by indicators such as the kind of house they live in and assets owned by their households (rather than by possession of a BPL card). In

particular, Move-up leaders claimed that they do not recruit students from families that own land. Other NGOs may be less selective, but they too have a social agenda of facilitating the economic mobility of low-income or marginalized households. Still, as discussed in section, these skill centres do not really target the 'poorest of the poor', for one of their criteria for recruitment is usually at least 10th standard education.

The data on the socio-economic backgrounds of our cohort of with trainees confirm this observation. While many belong to lower caste groups, they do not come from the lowest socio-economic strata. Reported ownership of assets shows that many of their families own some land, a house, as well as at least one vehicle, thus likely placing them well above the poverty line. Moreover, given the nature of the jobs for which they are being trained, most students need to have attained at least 10th pass or fail to be placed, and several in our cohort have even attended college. Thus, most students belong to households that have been able to keep at least one son or daughter in school up to 10th, 12th or beyond. The following statement by a Move-up placement officer illustrates the contradiction between their professed aim of poverty alleviation and the reality of the socio-economic profile of the students they recruit (as well as their attitude toward rural youth who are seen as lacking in ambition):

> *These people come from such a background that they don't have to work. I mean, you have your house, you have your food, you have your friends around you, they have survived all these years sitting at home. If our team hadn't gone and got them here, they would still be sitting at home.*

Making a precise determination of the socio-economic profile of students' families is difficult, given that most of our information comes from interviews with the students (rather than with other family members). In addition, the difficulty of measuring household income in India is well known. For this reason, we used several proxies to determine 'class' or economic status: ownership of land and other assets, and education and occupation of parents. We also asked respondents to estimate their annual household income and enquired about the total number of household members and dependents (non-working members), from which a calculation of per capita monthly household income could be made. However, reported household income is known to be highly unreliable, so the data presented here is only indicative and should be read against other findings such as on educational status and parents' education and occupation.

For the cohort as a whole, reported household income varied widely, but most reported Rs. 15,000 to 34,000 per month, followed by Rs. 10,000-14,000 and 35,000 and above (Table 5.7). As an exercise, we divided household income by number of household members to arrive at a rough estimate

of per capita household income, which shows an even wider variation, from Rs. 1000 to 15,000 per month, with the majority falling in the Rs. 1000-5000 range (Table 5.8). In addition, with regard to assets, most respondents reported that their families own a house, and many also own some land. The other important assets for this group were vehicle, agricultural land and livestock, in that order (Table 5.9). More than half the households owned some agricultural land.

With regard to parents' education, 45 percent of respondents' fathers had less than 5th class education, and only one-fourth had completed 10th standard or above. Half of the respondents' mothers were educated below 5th class, and one-third had 10th and above degrees. Surprisingly, the mothers of this cohort were relatively better educated than the fathers (Table 5.10). One-fourth of students' fathers and 15 percent of the mothers were engaged in agriculture as cultivators or agricultural workers. The fact that many reported owning land yet identified their parents as agricultural labourers suggests that they either they do not cultivate their own land, or they earn their most of their income from agricultural labour supplemented by income from the family farm. In either case, these households are likely to be mostly small and marginal landowners, or landless.

These data indicate that the trainees come from families that are well below middle class, even though some of the parents are educated and employed in white-collar (if low-level) jobs. The largest number of mothers (49) were reported as homemakers, while the rest were skilled or unskilled wage workers (19) and a few had office or government jobs (see Table 5.11). Of the fathers, 41 percent were skilled or unskilled wage workers while 14 had office jobs and 14 were self-employed.

Trainees in the SM/ AA cohort appear to be better off compared to Driving or Beauty sections, as indicated by the fact that all reported home ownership and a majority also had some agricultural land. The monthly per capita income of most households in this group was between Rs. 3000 and Rs. 5000. Moreover, most of these trainees had either not worked previously or had just a year's experience, suggesting that they had been supported by their families after they completed studies. However, the socio-economic differences between these groups are not very striking. Overall, all the students in the cohort as a whole come from families that are economically and socially deprived even if not 'poor' in the official or usual economic definition of the term. However, a focus on economic status elides the question of caste and community, factors which themselves may act as a hindrance to social mobility.

Table 5.7: Reported monthly household income, by course

	Reported household income per month					
Course	**Below 5000**	**5,000-9,000**	**10,000 - 14,000**	**15,000 - 34,000**	**35,000 and above**	**NA**
Sales / Admin Assistant	1	2	5	12	0	0
Driving	0	0	0	10	0	0
Beauty	2	6	5	10	4	7
Auto Service Technician	0	3	3	19	9	5
TOTAL	3	11	13	51	13	12

Table 5.8: Estimated monthly household per capita income, by course

	Sales / Admin Assistant	**Driving**	**Beauty**	**Auto Technician**	**TOTAL**
Rs. 1000 and below	1	0	0	0	1
Rs. 1001-3000	7	4	11	6	28
Rs. 3001-5000	10	4	8	10	32
Rs. 5001-7000	0	2	2	9	13
Rs. 7001-10000	1	0	3	4	8
Rs. 10001-15000	0	0	0	4	4
Rs. 15,001 and above	0	0	2	1	3
No information	1	0	8	5	14
TOTAL	20	10	34	39	103

Note: Calculated by dividing reported monthly household income by number of household members; see note on poverty line estimation in Appendix.

Table 5.9: Ownership of land and other assets, by course

	Assets owned by family					
Course	**Agricultural land**	**Urban land/ plot**	**House**	**Vehicle**	**Livestock**	**None of the above**
Sales / Admin Assistant	14	3	20	9	2	0
Driving	9	0	10	5	2	0
Beauty	12	1	21	14	1	8
Auto Service Technician	22	3	31	24	9	3
TOTAL	57	7	82	52	14	11

Table 5.10: Parents' education, by course

Course					
Father's education	**Sales / Admin Assistant**	**Driving**	**Beauty**	**Auto Technician**	**All**
Below class 5	13	9	11	11	44
Class 6- 9	4	1	10	12	27
SSLC / 10th	0	0	7	3	10
PUC	0	0	2	4	6
Diploma	1	0	0	1	2
Bachelors	1	0	3	2	6
Unsure	0	0	1	5	6
Mother's education					
Below class 5	10	8	16	16	50
Class 6-9	2	1	6	5	14
SSLC / 10th	5	0	6	9	20
PUC	0	0	2	2	4
Diploma	0	0	1	1	2
Bachelors	2	0	1	2	5
Unsure	1	1	2	4	8

Table 5.11: Parents' occupation, by course

	Course	Sales / Admin Assistant	Driving	Beauty	Auto Technician	All
Father's occupation	Agricultural labourer	2	5	1	1	9
	Farmer/cultivator	5	2	4	7	18
	Unskilled wage worker	4	2	5	6	17
	Skilled wage worker	4	0	9	11	24
	Office worker	1	0	4	2	7
	Self employed	2	0	7	5	14
	Government (regular)	1	0	2	4	7
	Homemaker	0	0	0	0	0
	Government (contractual)	0	0	0	0	0
	Others	1	0	2	0	3
Mother's occupation	Agricultural labourer	2	2	1	2	7
	Cultivator	3	1	2	2	8
	Unskilled wage worker	2	3	5	5	15
	Skilled wage worker	1	0	2	1	4
	Office worker	1	0	3	2	6
	Self employed	0	0	1	1	2
	Government (regular)	0	0	2	1	3
	Homemaker	6	4	15	24	49
	Government (contractual)	3	0	2	0	5
	Other	1	1	0	0	2

5.4 Caste and community

Most of the students in the cohort belonged to officially designated 'backward' castes – including OBCs, SCs and STs. One-third of the trainees belonged to SC/ST communities and one-third reported OBC status. However, given the politics of reservations in south India, a more fine-grained analysis is required to assess caste status in the case of OBCs. This is because in Karnataka and other southern states, 'dominant caste' or landowning agrarian communities such as Vokkaliga/ Gowda, Reddy, Shetty, Mudaliar, Lingayat, and Kuruba are (in some cases) classified as Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Table 5.12 tabulates these groups separately in order to distinguish landowning and politically powerful agrarian caste groups from other OBCs who are relatively deprived economically and socially repressed.

This analysis shows that just ten of the 103 respondents come from upper caste or 'Forward Castes' such as Brahmins, while 14 belong to landowning agrarian castes and 20 to other or unspecified OBC communities. Thus, 24 out of 103 come from socially 'forward' (even if technically OBC) communities, and 20 to 'other' OBCs. One-third belonged to SC/ST groups; SC communities represented include Neermane, Lambani, Adi Dravida and Adi Karnataka. In addition, there were a significant number of Muslims (17), while only three were Christians. Amongst auto technician trainees, fully one-third were SCs, followed by OBCs (Gowda, Kuruba, Vanniyar and Reddy). Muslims were represented mainly in the beauty courses, where almost one-third of the trainees belonged to this community. STs and Christians had marginal representation in our sample. Notably, a small number of trainees in the beauty and auto-technician sections claimed to be unaware of their caste, suggesting a lack of engagement with questions of caste within this largely urban cohort.

The information on caste and community identity, taken together with the data on socio-economic status presented above, suggest that these youth come from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds, yet they have attained a level of education that might allow them to move up the economic ladder – which is the stated purpose of skill training and urban employment.

The Pragati alumni data (Table 5.13) shows a contrasting pattern, in that 'General Category' trainees were the largest group, followed by OBCs who made up 28% of the cohort and SCs and STs who constituted 22.5% and 8% of the group, respectively.

Table 5.12: Caste and community, by course

Course Community	Sales Management / Admin Assistant	Driving	Beauty	Auto Service Technician	Total
Forward / upper castes*	0	0	3	7	10
Landowning agrarian castes (even if classified as OBC)**	5	0	4	5	14
Other OBCs	11	1	3	5	20
SC (all sub-castes)	2	6	7	13	28
ST	1	0	1	2	4
Muslim	1	2	10	4	17
Christian	0	0	3	0	3
Other/ NA	0	1	3	3	7

*Brahmin, Ksatriya, Vaishya, etc.

**Includes Vokkaliga, Lingayat, Mudaliar, Kuruba, Reddy, etc - groups that are OBC in Karnataka but known to be landowning 'dominant castes'

Table 5.13: Pragati alumni - caste and community

Caste	Number	Percent
OBC	311	28.0
SC	244	22.0
ST	86	7.7
General	430	38.7
MBC	14	1.3
NA	26	2.3
TOTAL	1111	100

5.5 Education and work experience

As noted above, most of the respondents had studied at least till class 10. The median level of education in the cohort as a whole was SSLC (10th), followed by PUC or 12th standard (Table 5.14). Most trainees in the Beauty, Auto Technician and Driving courses had completed matriculation, while almost half of the students in the Sales / Admin Assistant group had completed pre-university education (PUC or 12th). In the latter group, one-fourth had BA degrees and three even had MA degrees. The decision of these students to enrol in a training course is perhaps indicative of the lack of job opportunities even for degree holders or the information asymmetry faced by educated youth, especially those from rural backgrounds. Most of the students had studied only up to class 10 or less despite expressing an interest in studying further – pointing to financial constraints in their households that required them to join the workforce. Overall, as would be expected, the trainees in the Auto Technician and Driving courses had lower levels of education compared to the others. A of the auto mechanic trainees had pursued short ITI and diploma courses in allied areas such as mechanical and machinist training.

A significant number of our respondents had some prior work experience (mostly of one year or less), before joining the training programme (Table 5.15). All trainees in the driving cohort had work experience, and seven of the ten reported that they had discontinued studies early so that they could work to supplement the family's income. A majority of the beautician trainees respondents reported previous work experience of a year or less, perhaps linked to gender-based restrictions on working outside the home.

Table 5.14: Education of students, by course

Educational level	Sales Management / Admin Assistant	Driving	Beauty	Auto Service Technician	Total
Class 5 and below	0	1	1	0	2
Class 6- 9	0	1	5	5	11
SSLC/ 10th pass	1	6	16	20	43
PUC/ 12th	9	1	7	6	23
Diploma/ITI	2	1	0	4	7
Bachelor's degree	5	0	4	4	13
Master's degree	3	0	0	0	3

Table 5.15: Prior work experience, by course

	Course	Sales / Admin Assistant	Driving	Beauty	Auto Technician	All
Respondent's prior work experience (in years)	0-1 years	11	3	24	32	70
	More than 1 year but less than 2 years	5	1	4	1	11
	2-3 years	2	0	1	4	7
	More than 3 years	2	6	5	2	15
TOTAL		20	10	34	39	103

A large proportion of all the Pragati alumni (18%) had Class 12/ PUC qualifications, while 15.% had reached 10th standard and only a few were below 10th. A striking observation is that close to 19% were commerce (B.Com) graduates. A few had ITI diplomas, while another 9% had completed or were pursuing higher degrees Table 5.16).

Table 5.16: Pragati alumni - education

Education completed	Number	Percent
7th incomplete and below	18	1.6
9th & below	53	4.8
SSLC/ 10th	170	15.3
PUC/ 12th	202	18.1
ITI	45	4
B.Com	208	18.7
B.Sc	42	3.8
BBM	28	2.5
B.Com pursuing	33	3.0
Diploma	36	3.2
Degree pursuing	39	3.5
Degree incomplete	33	3.0
B.Tech	6	0.5
MBA	21	1.9
Others	177	15.9
TOTAL	**1111**	**100**

5.6 Conclusion

The findings presented in this section on the socio-economic background of students of skill training centres in Bangalore show that while a large proportion come from rural areas outside Bangalore, given the criteria of recruitment in terms of educational level, they are mostly not below the poverty line. Although a large proportion belong to Scheduled and Backward communities, and many of their parents were engaged in agriculture or low-paid informal sector occupations, most of the students had higher educational attainments than their parents, indicating a degree of social mobility, as well as aspirations, in their households. The aspirations of these semi-educated students from modest backgrounds who are being routed into the urban service economy through training have been explored in section 4. We delve further into the social and economic constraints and pathways of mobility of these students in the case studies in section 7.

Section 6. Raichur - Political Economy, Employment and Migration

During our field research in Bengaluru, we met several young migrants who had come from north Karnataka, particularly from Raichur. Interviews with them drew our attention to the ecosystem of employment opportunities, youth aspirations, and the status of skill development in the Hyderabad belt of Karnataka. Accordingly, Raichur was chosen as the district (and second city) to be covered in the research. Being located in the rain shadow area of the northern *maidan* region of Karnataka state and adjoining to the Rayalaseema region, Raichur has historically been associated with an image of drought, backwardness, poverty, migration and deprivation.

Section 6.1 below provides an overview of the district's political economy, focusing particularly on agriculture and industry. Section 6.2 describes skill centres in Raichur, the options available to youth who graduate from these centres, and also the gaps between what the centres teach and the structure of the local job market. The final section 6.3 draws on a study of 50 youth who have gone through skills training in three different centres, two in Raichur town and one in Maski. This section dwells on the inclinations, or otherwise, of youth to move out of Raichur, problems faced in settling into a job and a life in Bangalore, flaws in the mentoring/hand holding systems of the skill centres, and the vulnerabilities that youth face as they seek to get a foothold in the urban economy via the informal services sector.

6.1 Political economy of Raichur - an overview

Raichur district is situated in the northeastern part of Karnataka, which is also popularly known as Hyderabad Karnataka. The district consists of five administrative blocks (taluks), viz., Devadurga, Lingsugur, Manvi, Raichur and Sindhunur. Historically one of the backward districts of the state, characterized by high population growth, high mortality rates, low levels of literacy, and poor natural resource base, leading to slow and stagnant industrial growth, Raichur is one of the five districts in Karnataka currently receiving funds from the Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme. The two Karnataka Human Development Reports (GoK 2000, 2006), prepared in 1999 and 2005, rank Raichur as the least developed district and three of its taluks fall in the ten least developed taluks in Karnataka. Devadurga is the least developed taluk in the whole state.

6.1.1 Demography

Between 2001 and 2011 the population of Raichur increased by 15.5 percent. The district is one of the least urbanized districts in the state; thus between 2001 and 2011, the percentage of urban population almost remained constant at 25.2 percent and 25.4 percent, respectively. The literacy rate

of the district is 59.56 percent. The percentage of workers engaged in agricultural activities as cultivators and agricultural labourers has declined from about 73 percent in 2001 to 70 percent in 2011, whereas for the state the decline is from 56 to 49 percent. Hence, a comparatively larger number of workers are still dependent on agriculture in the district. The district has just 28 percent of its workers in non-agricultural activities, which is substantially lower than at the state level (47%). Thus, the district is predominantly agricultural with very low and slow diversification towards non-agricultural activities.

6.1.2 Agriculture

Food grains dominate the district's agriculture, with an area share of more than 73 percent of net sown area (NSA). Cotton and oil seeds are also grown, sustaining agro-based industries like ginning and spinning mills, oil mills, and rice mills which have provided some employment opportunities to the people of the district. The agrarian structure is highly unequal, where only 20-25 percent of households own land while the rest are landless. Most landholdings in the district are of just 1-2 acres.

Historically drought-prone, the situation has been aggravated by successive years of rainfall shortage since 2012-13. In 2016, Raichur and other districts like Bidar, Bijapur, Kalburgi, were among the most drought affected areas. Of the 176 taluks in the state, 136 were declared drought hit. Raichur is located between Krishna and Tungabhadra Rivers, both of which were dry in 2016 due to successive rain deficit years. The Alamatti Dam, which stores water from the Krishna, was at 10 percent of its capacity of 124 tmc, leading to massive out-migration.

Except for 2017, when the district received normal rains, adverse conditions have prevailed for the pursuit of agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood for most people in the district. The government has not been able to contain migration despite increasing work days under MNREGA from 100 to 200-250 days (for two years). On the other hand, corruption in village panchayats is high. For any government work, people have to bribe panchayat leaders, and this is one of the reasons why MGNREGS has not been implemented properly.[7]

6.1.3 Industry and employment

The fact that the largest number of people still remain confined to rural areas and agriculture is an obvious indicator that alternative channels of employment in industry are not available in the district.[8]

---

[7] *The New Indian Express*, 8 May 2019.

[8] According to a report by the Office of the District Statistical Officer of 2016, there are 403 factories across Raichur district, employing 5587male and 1887 female workers. Amongst them, eight are engineering

Due to lack of technological upgradation and competition due to imports, traditional industries like oilseeds and cotton lost their base.[9] For the state government, the focus has been less on generating employment by promoting large or medium industries, and more on self-employment through small and micro enterprises. In 2017-2018 alone, the Department of Industries and Commerce, sanctioned Rs. 50 crores towards this sector. Various loan schemes are available under the PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Guarantee Programme), and the Chief Minister's Employment Guarantee Program. Almost half of enterprises however typically become sick,[10] reflecting the district's dismal economic scenario.

In terms of urban employment opportunities, almost 5000 acres of land has been acquired by KIADB to promote industry. Around 200 big industries such as Sree Organics, Vishal Cotton Spin and Shilpa Antibiotics have come up. Other industries such as steel and fertilizers, and agro-processing industries like paddy processing, cotton ginning and pressing, oil extraction industries, are also found here. All of these major industries are owned and managed by entrepreneurs from Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The workers are brought from the northern states like Bihar, Orissa, etc. The reason for bringing workers from north India is mainly because the owners do not have much contact with the local language and residents, therefore they prefer not to engage local labour. The presence of industries has not yielded much benefit for local residents in terms of employment.[11]

6.1.4 Poverty

The Economic Survey of Karnataka, 2012-13 reports that the percentage of people below the poverty line in Raichur is more than that at the state level (GoK 2013). Estimation of poverty at the taluk level is difficult. More than three-fourths of the households have been issued with BPL cards in the district and in all taluks. The total landless households for Raichur district are estimated at 31831, which is

---

industries. There are 60 industrial sheds and 211 industrial plots. The number of small-scale units that has been set up till 2015-16 is 10061, with 45771 persons employed.

[9] However, according to officials, the district has the potential to emerge as a strong industrial base as it possesses abundant natural resources like minerals, power, land, human resources, railway and road connectivity, and being the nearest town to Hyderabad. Some of the major industries in Raichur include: The Hatti Gold Mines Company Ltd; Mysore Petrochemicals Ltd; Vishal Cotspin Ltd; Farroq Anwar Company; Surana Industries Ltd; Shilpa Medicare Ltd; Raichur Thermal Power Corporation Ltd; and Raichur Solvents. There are five industrial areas in the district at Raichur, Shaktinagar, Devasugur, Devadurga and Manvi with a total land area of more than 900 acres.

[10] Meeting with Basavaraj, Joint Director, Department of Industries and Commerce, Raichur, November 12, 2018.

[11] Meeting with Vijayakumar, social worker and founding member of NGO – **S**ocial **E**conomic and **V**ocational **A**ssociation (SEVA), October 11, 2018.

about 9 percent of Census households. Table 6.1 shows that Raichur had the second highest number of BPL card holders, next to Bellary, and the lowest per capita income compared to other districts in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

District level officials uniformly mentioned Raichur's unexplored and undeveloped potentials for economic growth. Thus, there is clearly a vacuum in terms of policy efforts to create alternative channels of non-farm livelihoods.

Table 6.1: BPL Card holders/ Antyodaya scheme beneficiaries in Hyderabad-Karnataka districts

Sl No	Districts	BPL Card holders/ Antyodaya		
		Urban	Rural	Total
1	Ballari	12727	43387	56114
2	Bidar	4882	31902	36784
3	Kalaburagi	7857	45985	53842
4	Koppal	5095	30410	35505
5	Raichur	11084	39519	50603
6	Yadgir	4184	29037	33221

Source: GoK (2016a)

6.1.5 Gender Inequality Index

In 2011, Raichur was one of the few districts which had a better sex ratio (exactly 1000) compared to the state as a whole. However, the district records the highest MMR in the state as a whole, ranging from 235 to 255 across taluks, indicating that all the taluks are more or less equally afflicted with the problem. Regarding political participation of women in panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies, female representation in the local bodies is around 40 percent throughout the district. The district has the minimum value for this indicator (Table 6.2). Even as late as in 2011, less than half of the female population was literate with a literacy rate of 48.7 percent, which is very low compared to the state average at 68 percent and district's own male literacy at 70 percent (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Indicators of GII in Raichur district, 2011-12

Indicators	Value
Sex Ratio	1000
Maternal Mortality Rate	244
Female literacy	48.73%
Female work participation rate	45.16%
Female elected representatives in PRIs and ULBs	40.20%

Source: GoK (2015).

The lower level of health, education, and participation in social, political and economic life has made women a neglected partner in development. Table 6.3 shows the Gender Inequality Index (GII) across districts with Dimensional Index Values and Ranking in Karnataka, 2011.

Table 6.3: Gender Inequality Index (GII) across Districts with Dimensional Index Values and Ranking in Karnataka, 2011

Sl No	Districts	Health Index	Empowerment Index	Labour Index	Gender Inequality Index
		Value	Value	Value	Value
1	Ballari	0.6020	0.558	0.187	0.167
2	Bidar	0.6611	0.560	0.328	0.115
3	Kalaburgi	0.6487	0.544	0.405	0.130
4	Koppal	0.5927	0.553	0.413	0.169
5	Raichur	0.6028	0.529	0.307	0.150
6	Yadgir	0.6502	0.505	0.345	0.110

Source: Economic Survey of Karnataka 2017-18 (GoI 2018).

6.1.6 Education and literacy

Raichur district has lower rates of literacy compared to the state (Table 6.4). 9.5 lakh people were deprived of the basic literacy in 2011, and nearly half of the illiterates were rural women of the district (GoK 2015)).

Table 6.4: Literacy rate (%) in Karnataka state and Raichur district, 2011

	Male	Female	Persons
Karnataka	82.47	68.08	75.36
Raichur	70.47	48.73	59.56

Source: GoK (2015)

According to the Annual Work Plan and Budget Report of the SSA, Raichur accounted for 51% of the total number of out of school children (OOSC) in the state. Girls account for more than half of OOSC. Table 6.5 shows the drop-out rate (DOR) of children in two levels, primary level, and secondary level. The drop-out rate is higher in Raichur compared to other backward districts in North Karnataka.

Table 6.5: DOR in Raichur district, 2011-12 (%)

Level	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary	7.96	12.78	10.22
Secondary	16.8	16.0	16.4

Source: GoK (2014).

6.1.7 Migration

While Raichur is witness to significant out-migration resulting from agrarian distress, there is also a history of in-migration in the district. In the context of Raichur, in-migration primarily comprises of people from Andhra (Nellore, Guntur, Vijayawada, etc.) who came to Raichur and bought agricultural lands from agrarian indebted families several decades ago. Landless families then either migrated to the cities or began working as daily wage laborers. Andhra migrants in the district have a dominant position in the district's economy and many have risen to the positions of MLAs and businessmen, thereby spreading their influence into almost every aspect of the lives of the people in Raichur. Raichur is popularly called *Hyderabad-Karnataka,* not only because of its regional proximity to the erstwhile Hyderabad state, but also because of Hyderabad's influence on the culture and lifestyles of the people[12]

Above we have highlighted Raichur's low performance in the economy as well as in human development parameters. A predominantly agricultural district, Raichur's predicament stems from being historically a drought prone area, in which adequate steps have not been taken by the state to provide the foundations of non-farm and industrial development as alternative sources of employment. Consecutive years (particularly since 2012-13) of drought have led to out-migration from the dry taluks such as Devdurga, Manvi and Lingsugur in Raichur district, as people have been leaving the villages in droves. Even small and middle farmers in the irrigated belts of Raichur district have migrated as both Narayanpur and Tungabhadra reservoirs are almost dry.

Interviews in villages in Raichur district revealed that migrants take up construction work during the off-agricultural season and return during the season to resume cultivation. The preferred destinations for work are Bangalore, Pune and Hyderabad. Skilled workers are mostly masons in the construction sector who earn Rs. 500 per day. Unskilled workers assist construction work and get Rs. 200 per day as wages. Usually couples migrate together to find work and children are left in the care of the elderly. While some take up such work only during a drought period, others migrate every year to supplement income earned from agriculture.

[12] Possibly, this influence is mainly found in Raichur inhabitants' imitation of migrants' lifestyle and preferences, in matters of food, drinking habits, and language.

Youth aspirations

Given the recurring agricultural crisis and the instability of incomes from agriculture due to droughts, village youth have increasingly turned away from agriculture and seek alternate means of livelihood. For those who have some years of school education, construction work is no longer a choice. For them, setting up small businesses, usually a mobile shop, bakery or textile shop, is the preferred option.

Among the educated village youth, there is a demand for office jobs and work related to computers. Young people whose families can afford to put them through college usually complete their bachelor's degrees and then take up jobs in schools and private companies such as the local solar and windmill company, or start their own ventures – typically small businesses such as printing and photocopy shop or textiles shop. Some go to Raichur town or to Bangalore to 'work in factories or offices'. Other occupations mentioned in the village include running small shops, working as attendant in hotels in nearby Manvi town, driving, and government employment such as sub-division assistant in courts, bus conductor, teacher, bank officer and police sub-inspector. Young men from poorer backgrounds *'just board a bus to Bangalore after completing PUC'*, according to a villager. Those who decide to stay back in the village typically work in the quarrying or construction sector in nearby towns or become security guards at construction sites. Many work as laborers on farms while also working in their own small fields.

These findings from our village field visits illustrate at the micro-level some of the broader features of the district presented above. We find that despite having small and unproductive holdings and a largely unpredictable agrarian livelihood structure, the majority of households remained tied to agriculture. While detailed profiles of village households are unavailable, we know from the socio-economic profiles, family and community backgrounds of trainees (survey results presented below, section 6.4) that many have low levels of education, with little opportunity for any alternatives to agriculture. Given the uncertainties of agriculture, many households had taken to construction work for at least part of the year.

Within this framework, there was a great deal of effort by parents to educate their children. These efforts led several in the younger generation, in the age group of 18-24, to complete at least 10 years of schooling and to look towards some kind of skill training and employment opportunities outside agriculture, in some cases outside the village. However, just a bachelor's degree or a few months of skills training offered little scope for regular employment in large cities like Bangalore or Pune. While many envisioned migrating to get into well-paying urban jobs, most remained confined to the smaller towns in the area or Raichur city in service jobs without security of tenure or social insurance. Thus, the faltering industrial development of the district, as well as the unregulated nature of service jobs, set the limits within which rural youth – no longer interested in agriculture – could

hope to find livelihoods. These points are taken up for a more detailed discussion in the next two sections.

6.2 Skill development in Raichur

In Karnataka, skill development is undertaken by the convergence of both-the central government-sponsored PMKVY and the state's Kaushalya Karnataka/ CMKVY that was initiated by the former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah (popularly called as Kaushalya Karnataka). As part of the CMKVY, the government has set up an ITI in Raichur, organizes '*rozgar melas'* where youth are informed about available training programmes, and also provides funding to NGOs and private agencies to conduct skills training. As highlighted below, the newly created PMKVY and Karnataka Kaushalya to an extent have changed the profile of skills training; older organizations, earlier funded by government departments, have struggled to compete with new actors who have entered this field with more focused funding for skills programmes through the Yojanas. The impact of the new programmes however appears to be inadequate in terms of the purpose for which they were set up.

6.2.1 Skill training centres

This section presents details on various skill training programmes and centres in Raichur district which we surveyed as part of the study.

Skill training for women empowerment

Surekha is a social worker and president of an NGO, Lalitha Fashion Centre, which works for the empowerment of women in Raichur. Established in 2010 with funding from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, her NGO has provided training in beauty and tailoring. The centre is located in the district headquarters. The NGO also helps some trainees to set up their own enterprises. However, the organization became caught in a cycle of low enrolments, drop-outs and declining government funding; finally compelled to charge fees from students, they terminated the training programme. Some students from the beauty course have started their own parlours in Raichur town. With regard to tailoring, the NGO supported a few women to buy sewing machines and they have started working from their homes. Surekha is of the view that the new skill training 'yojana' has grabbed all the government funding and this has had an adverse impact on existing training

programmes. They are now planning to look into the guidelines of PMKVY and initiate processes to re-launch the courses as part of NSDC and PMKVY.[13]

Skill training for rural employment

Amar Prema Charitable Society (APCS), in Maski, is about thirty years old and is attached to the local Roman Catholic Church. The church receives international funding from countries like Germany and Canada for skill training, free education and free tuition in villages. They mainly focus on underprivileged SC/ST/ OBC families and children of Devadasis and migrant laborers. Skill training is provided for courses like Computers (from basics to Tally), Tailoring and *Singarimela*[14] of 3-6 months duration. The skill centre has placed a few girls, a small percentage of the trainees, in garment factories in Bangalore. The trainees mostly considered this training as a means of improving their skills to make a living in the village. Computer training is the obvious choice of college-going girls and boys. With coaching for Tally, the trainees aspire to work as village accountant in the Panchayat and related jobs. Only a few wished to migrate. As most of the students are pursuing their education, there is no systematic placement procedure.[15]

Skill training for urban employment

Excelus Learning Solutions Pvt Ltd, located in Raichur town, is owned and managed by a private firm in Bengaluru. Funded by the PMKVY, they offer free training (typically to youth educated between 8th and 12th grades) for courses like CCTV Installation, Counter Sales Executive, Plumber, Warehouse Picker. In addition, all the courses include Basic IT and soft skills classes. The outfit offers placement in malls, call-centres, BPOs and other related sectors, in cities like Bengaluru and even in Raichur.[16]

As noted in previous sections, Pragati has multiple skill centres across India, providing courses in varied fields. They receive funding from NSDC as well as from corporate houses. The Pragati centre in Raichur provides training for only one course, 'Vocational Skill Training', comprising computer skills, Tally, GST, Spoken English, Values and Life Skills. Placement assistance is provided for students to find positions in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Raichur. Fluency in English communication, computer usage and assured job placements are the key points that attract youth to take up this training. The

[13] Interview with Surekha, social worker in Raichur, September 5, 2018.

[14] *Singarimela* is a temple art that involves musical performance of five different percussion instruments. This is mostly preferred by boys due to the physical strength needed for carrying and playing the instrument.

[15] Interview with Head of Skill Training and focus group-discussions with trainees in Amara Prema Charitable Society, April 10, 2018.

[16] Interview with trainers of Excelus Learning Solutions Pvt. Ltd, November 11, 2018.

trainees are expected to pay Rs. 3000 as fees and give a security deposit of Rs.1000 or their mark sheets. After graduation, the trainees have to submit their three months' salary slip, following which their marks sheet or the security deposit would be returned.

Need-based skill training

Social **E**conomic and **V**ocational **A**ssociation (SEVA) is an NGO set up in 1986 which provides need-based skill training courses. They have a unique style of functioning wherein a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat[17] (SWOT) analysis is initially conducted in the village to understand its consumption patterns, needs and problems. Accordingly, the most suitable course for the village is selected, such as auto repair or motor winding. Candidates are selected from gram sabhas by SEVA, and residential training is provided to the students. This approach was successful as they typically select only a couple of candidates from each village, so that there would be scope for the candidates to set up enterprises in their own villages. SEVA helps students with loan facilities for setting up their enterprise. NABARD has funded the food and accommodation expenses of trainees incurred for all these courses. The courses were also supported by private companies from CSR funds. Due to changes in governance and skill schemes, however, SEVA's access to funding declined, and skill training on a larger scale is on hold. SEVA is running a pre-university college for students of underprivileged backgrounds and with low scores.[18]

Finally, Neerikshe Trust in Mooranpur, Raichur runs courses such as carpentry, fitter and electrical repair, all of six months duration. However, the organization operates with only a handful of trainees. Currently, a group of three to five students were attending the course on electrical repair.[19]

6.2.2 Aspirations of trainees

Managers of local NGOs and skill centres in Raichur were by and large disappointed with their endeavours. Their engagement with skilling has a long history, going back to an earlier time, before the new state-sponsored skills initiative had appeared. However, they had not been successful in retaining state funding or getting fresh state funds for their programs. During discussions they highlighted the challenges to their work which emerged from the gaps between the evolving

[17] SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique used to help a person or organization identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is intended to specify the objectives of the business venture or project and identify the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieving those objectives.

[18] Interviews with Vijayakumar, founding member of SEVA, during multiple visits.

[19] Interview with Peter, Head of Neerikshe Trust, September 7, 2018 at Mooranpur, Raichur.

aspirations of youth and what is available in the job market. In this context, several interlocutors underlined the need to shape courses according to the requirements on the ground. For example, since youth are by and large disinterested in agriculture, there is an acute shortage of labourers. In this context, the CEO of a local NGO voiced the concerns of several other local NGOs: '*Youth should be trained in scientific and healthy agricultural practices; we should not only be able to revive agriculture, it could also lead to sustainable retention in the job, and a healthy produce can be assured.*'[20]

The youth generally expect 'end-to-end solutions', that is, skilling and placement. According to trainers, the job aspirations of youth are shaped by their desire to escape from farming and construction work[21] and the current culture of consumption. Their vision of a good job is centred around the desire for a 'chamber', preferably an air-conditioned office, and free Wi-Fi facility. There is little attention to preparing oneself for hard work and other struggles, according to these respondents, leading to the acute problem of retention in jobs.

According to local NGOs**,** PMKVY has been a failure in small rural districts like Raichur, where the job market is very different from that in cities like Bangalore. For example, according to Vijaykumar, the tailoring course is to train Basic Sewing Machine Operators. Between 2014 and 2018, around 600 candidates were trained in institutes in Raichur, with approximately Rs. 10,000 from PMKVY spent on each student. As there are no garment factories in Raichur, there would be no scope for employment locally for these trainees, who would also not be able to migrate out due to cultural and familial reasons. On the other hand, training based on the regional needs is absent in the PMKVY context.

Through institutes like RSETI (Rural Self Employment Training Institute), DIC (District Industry and Commerce department), KVK (Krishi Vigyan Kendra), certain training programmes are provided in Computers, Designing, Marketing, Store Keeping, etc – courses that would be useful in cities. Vijayakumar questioned, *'What is the impact of such courses in a place like Raichur which does not have malls and similar urban commercial set up?'*[22] Further, a Sales Management course attracts a large number of candidates in Raichur, but the fact is that there is not a single mall in the district. The only mall in Raichur prefers to employ local youth who live in the neighbourhood, as they accept the given salary, rather than youth trained in Sales Management.[23] This gap highlights the failure of the

[20] Interview with Vijaykumar.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

scheme, according to Vijayakumar. In contrast, Raichur has around 44 rice mills and each rice mill requires around six Boiler Operators. These vacancies have not been filled. Thus, if the scheme had included a Boiler Operator course, people would have benefited, according to him. Vijaykumar further noted:

> *It is unfortunate to know that the Zilla Panchayat had received an amount of Rs. 5,00,000 for implementing this need assessment and it has been ten years now and the fund is still not used. There is none to ask and none to take action about it.*

He added that there is a position in the Department of Industry and Commerce, for the nine districts of North Karnataka, whose main role would be to guide and direct villagers regarding educational and occupational opportunities. It has been 22 years since the post has been introduced, but it has remained vacant till date in eight districts (except Belgaum). When we enquired about this, no one would answer our queries, he complained.[24] He further observed that training centres such as SEVA lost their funding mainly because they were not ready to abide by the rules and guidelines of the new schemes and yojanas.

6.3 Trainees, training and jobs

This section draws on interviews with close to 50 trainees from three training organizations: (1) a training centre run by the Church, located in Maski village, which offers vocational courses in Computers (from basics to Tally), Tailoring and Singarimela; (2) the Pragati centre located in Raichur town, offering a Vocational Skill Training Course; and (3) students from Raichur who trained at Move-Up in Bangalore. Here we present information drawn from these interviews, as well as from more detailed case studies of a few trainees.

In this cohort men and women are almost equally represented. The economic profile of the group, in terms of income (Table 6.6), indicates that while a few families were very poor, almost all others were at least above the rural poverty line (see Appendix). Many of their households owned agricultural land of between 1-4 acres. In the Raichur context of frequent droughts and lack of irrigation, ownership of land per se does not convey much about a household's economic status; however, we note that in terms of assets almost all the households owned a house, a bike, some livestock, and so on. Almost all the students had completed the 10th or PUC (Table 6.7). Going by household assets, it seemed plausible that these families could afford to send at least one child for a

[24] Ibid.

period of training without having to use his/her labour for the household's immediate economic needs. Most of the students in the Church-run skill programme, for example, were undergoing training between semesters or after finishing high school. Follow-up queries showed that almost all had returned to their studies after training. The training was thus seen by the students and their parents as something to do during the break, which would provide additional skills to the students.

While it is true that trainees' households were in a position to support their children to go to school/college/vocational training, it is important to highlight the rough edge of struggle for economic survival that many of the households had undergone or were still undergoing. Given the constraints of making a living out of agriculture, the parents of most of the trainees had transitioned to the construction sector. The histories collected from a few households revealed that the father and/or brothers, sometimes even the trainee himself, had worked at construction sites in Raichur and/or Bangalore. Some had worked to be able to buy a small piece of land in their village or to build a house, while others worked for a few months in the city and typically spent a few months in the village each year. With the exception of two respondents, almost uniformly the parents of the trainees were agriculturalists (that is, they either worked on their own small landholdings or as wage laborers on others' land), or they had become construction workers (Table 6.8).

Table 6.6: Per capita income of Raichur respondents

Per capita income	No of respondents
Rs. 1000 and below	4
Rs. 1200- 3000	19
Rs. 3200- 4500	9
Rs. 4500- 6000	5
Rs. 6500 and above	3
Information unavailable	9
Total	**49**

Table 6.7: Educational qualifications of Raichur respondents

Educational Qualification	No of respondents
10th and below	14
PUC pass	17
ITI/ Diploma	11
Pursuing/ completed college degree	7
Total	**49**

Table 6.8: Occupational details of parents of Raichur respondents

Father's occupation		Mother's occupation	
Agricultural labour/ farmer	20	Agricultural labour/farmer	21
Government job	5	Government job	1
Daily wage worker/ Construction	7	Daily wage worker/ Construction	3
Works at a shop/ factory/ Business owner	3	Homemaker	19
Others (barber/ driving/tailor/vendor /cleaner/ private job)	7	Others (domestic help/ tailors/gardener)	2
Information unavailable	7	Information unavailable	3
Total	**49**	**Total**	**49**

This background highlights that for households at low levels of earnings, with minimal assets, education of children had emerged as a matter of prime importance, and parents were instrumental in pushing their children to study more or to get vocational training. Interestingly, this was true across both genders. While parents of girls clearly did not want to see their daughters going to live alone in a big city, nevertheless they were willing to have them attend vocational courses while staying in a hostel, if accompanied by other girls of the same village or by a relative or friend. Parental aspirations for their children were not only to get them educated in the abstract, but frequently had a specific vision. 'Anitha', whose parents were not educated and were working as farmers and agricultural wage earners, said she wanted to become a bank manager because *'my mother wanted to see me as a bank manager'.* 'Basavaraj', a former construction worker whose father and brother remain construction workers, said, '*I joined the course only because my parents asked me to. I did not listen to them when I was in school, at least now I want to listen to them'.*

'Utthappa' had been a construction worker in Raichur, Bangalore and Kerala. He narrated his experience in Kerala:

> *It was tough work there as they had to work in heavy rain. Due to heavy rains, there was no machines used to send concrete up the floors, we had to transport the concrete up the floors with our bare hands. Our hands used to bleed* (he shows his veins and scars).

Since his parents *'could not see him do 'hard work'* he left the job, and eventually with the support of his parents he joined the Move-up course. These and several other examples demonstrate that, woven into the struggles of families who had very little resources to fall back upon and were managing to sustain themselves through manual labour (mostly in construction), was a very purposeful desire to see their children lead a better life. To what extent did skills policies, programmes and institutions provide the necessary support to enable rural youth to transition to a higher order of earnings and life chances?

The educational profile of the trainees indicates that they were much ahead of their parents. While most of the parents were reported to be uneducated (most had not been to school or had not studied beyond class IV), in the group of 49 trainees as many as 28 had completed PUC or an ITI or some other kind of diploma. Fourteen had either passed or had studied up to class IX or SSLC. Almost all had at least ten years of schooling, and most had studied beyond, with about seven graduates in the group (Table 6.7).

Almost every student believed that after completing the training (particularly at Pragati and Move-up) they would be able to find a job. Only a very few spoke of independent entrepreneurship, typically around setting up a computer or mobile shop. The common vision was to get a position in an office, preferably as a computer operator, which would provide an income of Rs. 10-15,000 per month. Only a few mentioned specifically that they would like to get a job in Bangalore; for them, the dream of moving to the city appeared to be part of an overall desire for social mobility, to move away from farming/agriculture. Most of the youth, however, were aware that with a salary of Rs. 10,000 it would be more practical to stay put in Raichur, where they need not pay house rent and could contribute to their family's income.

Table 6.9: Expected employment and post-training employment of Raichur respondents

Expected employment		**Post-training employment occupation**	
Police/ bank/ government job	14	Sales jobs - retail outlets/ call centres (Big Bazaar/ Girias/ Panasonic/ Digi Call)	11
Office job/ job offered by training centre	16	Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd.	2
Others (driving/ business/ any job)	19	Other	6
		Unemployed	2
		Studying	20
		Construction worker	1
		Information unavailable	7
Total	**49**	**Total**	**49**

It was obvious that the concept of government employment had a hegemonic sway over the minds of rural youth. The most frequently stated dream was to get a government job, a bank job, or to become a police officer. The preference for government employment was indeed ironic, given that the only available jobs would be in the lower rungs of the services sector. Thus, of the 49 respondents, if we leave aside the twenty students who returned to their studies, about 15 found positions as salespersons and as drivers, two remained unemployed, and remarkably, one person returned to construction work (Table 6.9).

Of the three training centres, the stated objective of one (Move-up) was to facilitate the movement of rural youth to urban areas. The Move-up mobilization team was quoted as saying, '*Ooralli khaali odadtira, sumne banni Bangalore ge*' ('You people just loaf around in the village, come with us to Bangalore'). Amongst students and staff of the Pragati centre at Raichur as well, the possibility of moving to Bangalore was viewed as a positive option. Of the 49 respondents, however, as many as 23 stated that they would like to work in Raichur, while only 14 expressed a clear wish to work in Bangalore. The rest appeared ambivalent on this question, but even amongst these, several stated that they would work in Bangalore for some years and then return to Raichur to build their lives there (Table 6.10).

While the desire to remain in or return to the place of origin may appear natural, mainstream development thinking has viewed rural-urban migration as the only and inevitable outcome of the process of development. As such, the implicit (or sometimes explicit) objective of skill programmes has been tied to the vision of moving rural youth to urban areas (as discussed in section 4). The outcome of these initiatives has often reflected both a lack of understanding of the perspectives of rural households and youth in particular, and also an unwillingness to address the question of what opportunities for employment and living are actually available to migrant, semi-skilled youth in the city. The trajectories of some of the respondents reveal that rural folk may have a strong desire to stay back in their place of origin, and on the other side what is available in the city may be unattractive and unacceptable. The dynamics of rural-to-urban migration in the context of skill programmes thus threw up many interesting issues.

Despite the attractions of promised jobs in the city, the trainees belonged to households which were deeply invested in the so-called 'native place', and an important part of the family's as well as the individual's aspiration was to be able to buy land in the village of origin. Parents' desire to educate their children was etched with the ambition to see them in a government job, which would enhance the family's economic position in terms of being able to buy agricultural land, build or extend a house, and so on. While the literature on migration has presented the desire to leave the village and agriculture and move to the city as uniform or at least very widely shared, our limited findings suggested that

perhaps this needs to be modified or fine-tuned. Our discussions with rural youth showed that the attractions for the city were seriously dimmed not only by the knowledge that opportunities of earnings would be limited due to a higher cost of living in the urban context, as well as a strong desire to make a life for themselves in Raichur from the opportunities available there. Thus, out of 49 respondents, only four were actually working in Bangalore (Table 6.10).

> *One has to be careful in their dealings with people as it* [Bangalore] *is not a very safe place, especially for people from other places.*
> - Basavaraj

> *In Bangalore there is time sense, we should start from 8:30 am to 6 pm. In my village we go at 10 am and come back at 5 pm and it is our work. In my village I used to get Rs. 300 first, now I get Rs. 400. If we stay in the village it is easy. There is no need to worry about cooking food or clothes for work, everything will be easy. In Bangalore we get more money but it will be spent easily. Also, in Bangalore we will become bad people as there is no one to look after us.*
> - Utthappa

Table 6.10: Preferred and Actual Location of Employment of Raichur Respondents

Location	Expected	Post Training
Raichur	23	37
Bengaluru	14	4
No specific preference	12	0
Information unavailable	0	8
Total	**49**	**49**

For many youths, the desire to stay back in Raichur was inextricably linked to the issue of land and building a future for the family by creating a stable and viable economic unit. Basavaraj said:

> *I want to build a house and buy a car in my village. I want to come to Bangalore and stay here for a job. But I wish to own a house and live well in my village.*

Dasappa, who returned to the village disappointed after quitting his job at a call centre in Bangalore, similarly said:

I want to build a house. I want to make my parents rest and stay away from agricultural work. I also want to buy a bike.

'Earesh Desai' worked as an agricultural labourer and as a construction worker intermittently in his village in Manvi. He then enrolled for the Pragati course in Raichur, and through his own contacts he got a job as a cashier in a Big Bazaar outlet in Bangalore, for a monthly wage of Rs. 10,000. He lives in a shared PG accommodation, for which he spends Rs. 4500 per month. His family is now pressurizing him to return to the village, and he is inclined to do so.:

I want to earn and look after my family. I would also like to get a house constructed and buy a bigger piece of agricultural land when I have enough savings.

Part of the inclination to stay back or return to Raichur was linked to the experience of the trainees with the training centre, as well as with the overall environment in Bangalore for a migrant seeking work. Basavaraj is a former construction worker who worked in both Raichur and Bangalore. He joined the Move-up training centre, where he trained as a driver. However, the placement team was unable to provide him with a job and so he went back to his village. Over the course of the next six months, Basavaraj found himself successively in two driver jobs paying around Rs. 11,000 per month, but as salary was not paid regularly, he quit these jobs. He finally found a position as a driver in the nursery in his own village, at Rs.10,000 per month, and is happy with this. However, he has still not received his driving license from the training centre as promised (see section 4).

Utthappa, another ex-construction worker, had worked on construction sites in Raichur, Bangalore and Kerala, where he had earned between Rs. 350 to 450 per day. He later trained as a driver at Move-up, but he could not afford to stay and wait for the driving license in Bangalore so decided to return to his village. According to him, even if he had opted to stay and find a job in Bangalore after the course, he would only have been able to get a job to pick and drop vehicles for servicing in an auto service centre. Utthappa's case is interesting, as he returned to working on his family's divided agricultural land, from where income was very limited. Then he worked for some months for a trucking agency to deliver cement from Salem to Bangalore. Although this job promised an income of Rs. 15,000 per month, he had to quit as the payment was very irregular. He returned to construction work, in a quarrying unit run by his uncle who supplies stones to villagers who are building houses. The unit employs three other workmen. Uthappa gets a daily wage of Rs. 500 and a lot of free time as his working hours are only in the morning to early afternoon, and he is happy with this job. He admitted, however, that in case the unit closes, there would be very little by way of options

for him as there is no work in the village. Although he finally received his driving license, he is no longer interested in going to work in the city.

'Sangabasappa' is an Arts graduate. After working sporadically in medical shops in his village, he joined Move-up in the Sales Management course. Through the placement service he received an offer from a call centre in Bangalore. He worked there for just three days, then because he heard stories from colleagues about delayed salary payment, he left. He was staying at the Move-up residential centre, but *'they told us to go out soon and find other places to stay… no food, only accommodation was provided for Rs. 50 per day'*. He thought the training centre would offer some help to stay in Bangalore but they did not. With utmost disappointment he said:

> *They haven't even called us after that. After graduation they won't care for us. None of my friends are working. All have left jobs due to high paying guest accommodation rates. During training if the salary is so low, how to survive? Move-up says no need to pay advance. But we can't even pay the rent with our salary.*

Thus, he was forced to quit the job and return to the village, where he does a bit of agricultural work on the land owned by his family but spends most of his time 'roaming around'. There is no employment in the village, according to him.

'Mallesh' worked as a construction labourer and then in a CCTV company where he got paid Rs. 9000 per month, quit his job as the owner was abusive and he did not get paid for night shift work. He went back to his village and eventually joined and completed the Move-up driving course. However, he was not able to get any placement after his training and again returned to the village. His dream now is to *'work in the village… start a business and to make money'*. He also wanted to fulfil his parents' wish that he should study further.

As we followed these students after the training, the varied trajectories of their occupational lives highlighted not only the unpredictability and instability of the job market, but also – and more importantly – that the training they had received placed them on a fragile footing in terms of getting their desired positions. It also showed that the placement services of the training centres offered only very partial support in terms of providing information, networks, or mentoring post-placement. Against the dreams of an office job involving computers, placement was typically in large retail stores in Bangalore (two) with a salary of Rs. 10,000 per month and with no additional benefits, or as part time service person in a hotel in Raichur with Rs. 7500 per month as wages; or at a car showroom, helping clients, at Rs. 4500 per month. A few were fortunate to get positions at electronics showrooms

with a package of Rs. 10-11,000; only one was placed at a call centre with a monthly salary of Rs. 18,000 (Table 6.11).

The post-training trajectory of these youth thus revealed a complex set of factors at work, where the institutional support from the Bangalore-based training centre was inadequate to sustain them, either to get jobs, to get the driving license, or to stay in the city until some employment could be found. While a few found work in their village, these histories revealed that the training programmes they had undergone in the city had no significant impact on the lives of these youth. Irregular work in services (as driver) or in construction defined the post-training lives of most.

Table 6.11: Salary details of Raichur respondents

Salary	**Expected**	**Post training**
Rs. 5000 and below	0	1
Rs. 5000 - Rs. 10,000	17	7
Rs. 10000 - Rs. 15000	15	2
Rs. 15000 - Rs. 20,000	6	2
Rs. 20,000 - Rs. 30,000	3	2
Above Rs. 30,000	1	0
Continuing studies	0	4
Information unavailable	7	31
Total	**49**	**49**

6.4 Conclusion

In a context like Raichur where agriculture is a shrinking domain of livelihood, and with faltering development of industry, skill training would appear to be a significant intervention to equip youth to find work in the emerging services sector. However, our study of the district raises several questions: First, can skills provide the bridge to sustainable livelihoods, in a context where much of employment in services is unregulated? Second, is skill training tuned to local/regional requirements, that is, do skill programmes match local job requirements? Finally, how does one understand the process of urban migration from the viewpoint of skill training in a district like Raichur?

The study has highlighted the disjuncture between skill training and the job market. While training programmes focus on tailoring, sales management, accounting/tally and similar courses, in a

city like Raichur there are no garment factories, hardly any malls, and very few companies which would recruit young people with basic training in accounting, Tally, and so on. The obvious destinations for jobs, cities like Bangalore or Hyderabad, are fraught with multiple obstacles, such as low salaries, high cost of living, the sense of alienation in a big city, and inadequate mentoring, support and hand-holding from the training centres. For women, the refusal of families to allow them to migrate is a significant constraint. Beyond this, even though rural-urban migration is widely seen as part of the story of development, a large number of youth and their families in Raichur visualized a future for themselves within the confines of their villages or towns. Their imaginations were anchored in the purchase of land, building houses, and most importantly, being able to find a suitable job in Raichur. In this vision, the dream of local youth could be interpreted to be one where Bangalore could come to Raichur, rather than the other way around. And it is here that policies have faltered, not only in not providing appropriate, more region-specific skill training, but in failing to provide an overall context of robust growth in industries and services such that local youth would not be compelled to look outside for jobs.

Section 7. Working in Bangalore's New Service Economy – An In-depth Sectoral Exploration

The discussion in the preceding sections showed that the service economy is characterized by high levels of attrition, especially during the first few weeks and months of employment. This suggests that semi-educated youth tend to become footloose workers in the city, moving from one company or job to another in search of higher pay, or returning home when it becomes too tough. Indeed, this seems to be a characteristic of employment conditions in industries such as organized retail and beauty, as well as transportation, BPO, and so on, which not only create but also profit from having 'flexible' and non-permanent workforces. Consequently, service workers appear to be highly mobile and their jobs unstable.

On the other hand, service sector jobs sometimes provide a useful platform for youth who are shaping other strategies of mobility for themselves. Their short life histories reveal complex pathways of mobility between Bangalore, their hometowns, and other cities – coming to the city for training, working a few months, returning home to help in the family enterprise, migrating to another city on a temporary job to earn some money, to help their families or start a business. These peregrinations are interwoven with periods of self-cultivation, in which they join various courses – computer, stenography, spoken English, coaching class – in the hope of equipping themselves for the kind of life they imagine for themselves. Yet these courses are inadequate and decent jobs are scarce – mostly cornered by those who are already endowed with certain kinds of capital. The stratum of youth that our study has documented – most with at least 10th standard education but without good professional or college degrees, and with limited English language skills – cannot aspire for more lucrative service jobs such as in international call centres, IT companies or banks. But they are well suited to the requirements of industries such as retail and vernacular language customer support services, which hire large numbers of workers with minimal skills and are able to pay low salaries because of the seemingly unending supply of potential workers.

In order to extend and deepen our understanding of precarity and workers' experiences in Bangalore's service economy, we conducted additional research, using a case study approach, in three key sectors – Beauty & Wellness, Retail and Transportation. This phase of the research involved repeated interviews with selected employees as well as interviews with managers and other actors in these sectors. The findings are presented in this section.

7.1 The beauty sector: Migration, skilling and livelihoods

I don't want to go to my village and work. I am facing some issues here with food, stay, etc., but …. I will stay here as long as I can tolerate the conditions and I trust that I have a good tolerating capacity.

- 'Suvarna' from Gadag district

The owner asked me to stay in the salon and finish cleaning the salon ...at around 10 pm, he called me and gave me my salary and asked me to leave the next day. I didn't expect that he would ask me to leave.

- 'Savithiri' from Koppal district

The existing literature on the beauty industry has looked at a range of issues that emerge from this rapidly expanding sector. Feminist scholars have seen beauty salons primarily as spaces of gendered labour and consumption, viewing the salon critically for reinforcing particular constructions of the female body, gendered employment practices, and so on (Allison 1976). Broadly within the critical feminist tradition, several scholars have also looked at salons as spaces of entrepreneurship, particularly where women struggle to set up businesses and face many challenges stemming from the nature of the personal services offered, involving close physical contact and employment of young women (Narendran 2011). More recently, research on salons in Indian cities has examined the increasing employment of young women from the Northeast, viewing labour in this sector within a framework of intersectionality where women's independent migration and work are seen as closely shaped by gender, ethnicity, community, urban spatial isolation and informal work (Deori and Rajagopalan 2018).

Informed by this literature, our work on the beauty sector is anchored in a somewhat different set of questions which position the young woman beautician as part of an emerging class of service sector workers. As discussed above, a large number of youth are being pulled into the workforce via a new set of policies and institutions – the Skill India policy which has set out targeted programmes for training youth, particularly from disadvantaged families; skill development missions run by state governments; and private and NGO skill training organizations. These policies and organizations can be seen as a bridge between India's large, barely educated, unskilled, and frequently drop-out youth population, often touted as the 'demographic dividend', on the one hand, and the rapid expansion of the urban services sector where such youth can supposedly be employed. The two broad questions that frame this enquiry are, what is the nature and impact of targeted skills training on youth who have

limited education? Given the largely unregulated and informal character of employment in the lower rungs of the service sector, what options and opportunities open up for youth who undergo skill training?

Within this broad query, we examine the beauty industry in terms of three intersecting themes. First, while women's migration has earlier been seen mainly as part of household migration, or as a result of marriage, women's independent migration is now being increasingly acknowledged and studied. At the lower end of services and manufacturing – such as export industries, domestic work and health care professions such as nursing – migration is driven by economic need and the situation of migrant women workers in these occupational spaces has been largely seen as exploitative. However, of the four training centres we studied, only one (Move-up) was primarily focused on mobilizing youth from rural areas to come to Bangalore for training and then urban employment. Training programs in beauty were presented in the course of rural mobilization efforts as providing attractive employment opportunities for young women. An important objective of this study was to examine the impact of these efforts on women's movements and their eventual life trajectories.

Second, insofar as skill development policies, programmes and training institutions have been positioned as playing key roles in the lives of unemployed youth by providing training and employment, our objective was to examine the actual dynamics of the process of mobilization and the kinds of training, mentoring, hand holding and support that is provided through these schemes and organizations.

Finally, even as a large number of young women are joining the beauty sector, the sector itself remains highly diverse in terms of salaries and the regulations that govern salons. Our objective was to understand to what extent the structure of the sector impacts the lives and livelihoods of the young women seeking work in beauty parlours after a period of training.

This section presents a description and analysis of the life and occupational trajectories of young women, some of them migrants, who trained to be beauticians through three of the training centres included in the study – Move-up, SkillConnect and Allure Institute. Through interviews and a case study approach, a cohort of 35 women working in the beauty sector in Bangalore was studied. Our research focused on the socio-economic profile of the trainees, their period of learning and exposure at the training centres, and their post-training life and occupational trajectories. We highlight: (1) the obstacles to migration faced by young women entering this industry through skill centres; (2) the nature of skill training provided which leads these young women to become helpers rather than professional beauticians in salons; and (3) the unregulated and informal character of employment which generates multiple vulnerabilities in the lives of these young female workers.

7.1.1 Socio-economic profile

With regard to socio economic profile, 11 of the trainees were migrants, while the remaining 23 had homes in Bangalore (Table 7.1). Tables 7.2 and 7.3 indicate the socio-economic background of the trainees. Our findings suggest that the higher income households are mainly from urban areas. The parents of the urban trainees were engaged in their own business/shops, a few in government jobs, while most were in occupations like driver, tailor, vendor and so on. These data show that the urban-based trainees were at an economically higher level than the trainees from rural/agricultural families. However, the in-depth case studies indicate that several of the Bangalore trainees came from households precariously placed in the urban informal economy.

With regard to caste/community composition, the trainees included both Hindus (21) and Muslims (10). Amongst the Hindus, there were eight in the SC/ST category, three OBCs, and the remaining ten belonged to other castes. In terms of educational background, the largest number had studied up to class 10th, nine had completed PUC, and five had bachelor's degrees (Table 7.4).

Table 7.1: Place of origin of beauty training cohort

Home district	Respondents
Bangalore	16
Districts of Karnataka (other than Bangalore)	12
Other (outside Karnataka)	6
Total	**34**

Table 7.2: Rural and urban household per capita income of beauty respondents

Household per capita income	Rural	Urban	Total
Rs. 1000 and below	1	1	2
Rs. 1100 - Rs. 1500	3	1	4
Rs. 1600 - Rs. 2500	0	3	3
Rs. 2600 - Rs. 4500	1	8	9
Rs. 4500 - Rs. 6000	1	1	2
Rs. 6500 and above	1	5	6
Information unavailable	2	6	8
Total	**9**	**25**	**34**

Table 7.3: Occupational details of parents of beauty respondents

Father's Occupation		**Mother's Occupation**	
Agricultural labour/ farmer	5	Agricultural labour/farmer	3
Government Job	3	Government Job	3
Daily wage worker/ Construction	4	Daily wage worker/ Construction	2
Shop/ Business owner	6	Shop/ Business owner	1
Others (driving/tailor/vendor/ private job)	13	Homemaker	20
Unemployed	2	Others (domestic help/ tailor)	5
Information unavailable	1	Information unavailable	0
Total	**34**	**Total**	**34**

Table 7.4: Educational qualification and community / caste of beauty respondents

Educational Qualification	**Respondents**	**Community**	**Caste**	**Respondents**
10th and below	18	Hindu	SC/ST (8)	21
PUC pass	9		OBC (3)	
ITI/Diploma	1		Others (10)	
Pursuing/completed degree	5	Muslim		10
Didn't go to school	1	Christian		3
Total	**34**	**Total**		**34**

7.1.2 From training centre to workplace - skill acquisition and exposure

We followed the trainees in the beauty cohort from training into the workplace. This section describes the training methods and placement processes, in the three training as well as students' experiences of work.

In an earlier era, salons offered employment on the basis of skills and experience rather than educational qualifications. In the current context, soft skills are an important criterion for recruitment. Diplomas or certificates from leading institutions offering high-priced courses, such as Javed Habib or L'Oreal, will enable a young beautician to intern in larger salons and eventually find placement with a starting salary of around Rs 35-40,000. On the other hand, for those who enter the profession from skill centers which are less known and provide free and broad training in multiple job roles (rather than in specialized roles), the entry point into the business is inevitably as 'helper'. A woman in a helper position may be able to obtain some on-the-job training over time.

From the entry point there is a clear hierarchy of opportunities for career growth, based on the level and type of skills that the employee has been trained in. In companies such as Allure, there is scope for career advancement and monetary improvement, as employees may progress to Senior Beautician, Stylist, Creative Artist, Trainer, Area Business Executive, and so on. A Stylist would earn around Rs. 30,000 per month and a Creative Stylist could get around Rs. 45,000 plus incentives. There are different opportunities for career growth, such as working with the Allure Institute's fashion shows. As a senior manager of Allure said:

> *There is scope for career growth within the organization. But capable people are limited. This limitation can be attributed to their lack of imagination to grow and the rigidness to adapt to the challenging needs of the industry.*

Training processes

Life at the training centers provides opportunities for trainees to get accustomed to a new livelihood and related skills. In the process of learning these skills, trainees consciously or unconsciously enter into a relatively new lifestyle. In this context, it is worthwhile to look into the organizational structure and culture that beauty trainees are exposed to, across different training centers.

The training centres we observed take a holistic approach to beautician training, especially given that beauty salons are mainly an urban phenomenon. For rural trainees, this domain is a relatively new space, hence the training curricula include topics such as self-grooming, spoken English, managing relationships, basic math for personal accounting of expenses, and so on. With regard to skill-specific training, all centres approach training in a professional manner. The trainees go through theory and practical sessions. With respect to theory classes, the content is given in English but trainers use a combination of Kannada, Tamil, or Telugu as well as English as the medium of instruction. The students are expected to memorize the content of the lessons and present it at the end of each week. Since the presentation is expected to be in English, students generally lack confidence and so are hesitant. A trainer stated, *'Their hesitation and under-confidence is because they have to present in English. If this wasn't specified, then there would have been no hesitation at all'*. English is not only the biggest stumbling block, it is also a crucial element in the bridge that will supposedly transform the trainees from rural, unskilled and uninformed persons into urban, skilled workers who are supposedly familiar with the world of style and branded beauty products. The exercise of presenting the week's content is to help trainees to understand and communicate in English, since knowledge of English is an important criterion during placement. Further, through beauty classes the trainees are exposed to products – especially those of the company that sponsors the products used in the course.

The knowledge that trainees gain about brands, products and their usage are key components of the 'exposure' provided during the training process.

In addition to training, the SkillConnect centre provides internships for students as part of the training process, to familiarize them with working in salons. Although trainees are given the freedom to look for jobs in the salons of their preference, the training centre's letter of request eases their entry into a job. Thus, the training period not only includes classroom teaching and demos but also real time practical experience in salons. On completion of the three months of internship, some trainees continue to work in the same salon, while others look for other opportunities.

By the end of the course, trainees are considered prepared to present themselves for placements and familiar with salon etiquette and the workplace. The transformation that migrant students undergo during training is remarkable. While not all are able to communicate in English by the end of the course, students who entered with absolutely no knowledge of English are able to understand the language and respond in Kannada interspersed with confident English utterances. 'Sharanya' from the Move-up training centre is an example. Hailing from a village in Gadag district in Karnataka, she was a victim of child marriage and had been abandoned by her husband. Without formal schooling and 'just qualifying' as literate, she managed to learn to read, write and speak a smattering of English. Her determination to make a living helped her to learn not only the skills related to beauty work, but also key soft skills such as self-grooming, appropriate communication patterns in salons, and so on. She was successful in getting placed in a salon in Bengaluru and has since then been earning a living for herself.

7.1.3 Post-training period: Expectations and reality

Most of the trainees (30) said that they wanted to settle in Bangalore (Table 7.5), thus displaying a pattern that was echoed in the Raichur study where we found that young women aspire to live and work in the city (see section 6). While some wanted to work in salons, several expressed a desire to set up their own salons. Their initial income expectations ranged from Rs. 7000 to 15,000 per month.

Table 7.5: Preferred location for employment, beauty respondents

Location	Respondents
Bengaluru	30
Other (Tumkur/ Chikmagalur)	2
No specific preference	2
Total	**34**

Table 7.6 summarizes our findings on the post-training employment situation of respondents. The total number of trainees who were employed following training was 14. As many as 15 had sought but were not able to find employment, while seven went back to complete their studies. Reflecting the comparative disadvantage of rural students, only three of the 11 migrant women found employment and stayed on in Bangalore. Six could not find employment and returned to their villages and hometowns. Thus, for most trainees from rural areas, the desire to work and to settle in Bangalore remained an unfulfilled dream. Of the 23 Bangalore based trainees, 10 were employed and 9 could not find employment. The reasons cited for not being employed varied, from marriage and child rearing responsibilities, to not having the required work experience, to inability to sustain oneself in the city on a very meagre salary. These factors are highlighted in the discussion below, which draws on our case studies.

Table 7.6: Details of employment of beauty respondents

Employment details of the respondents	**Migrants**	**Non-migrants**	**All respondents**
Employed in Bangalore	3	10	13
Employed elsewhere	1	0	1
Unemployed	6	9	15
Information unavailable	1	4	5
All respondents	11	23	34

Conditions of employment

A critical aspect of the post-training employment situation were the conditions on which the women found employment. Out of the 14 women who were working, only two had been given a written contract (Table 7.7). As is evident from the case studies, the absence of a contract or an appointment letter is a serious handicap for women employed in a sector characterized by quick staff turnover. Without a written contract, employees cannot even claim a work or experience certificate with which they could approach other employers. A written contract also provides some entitlements, however limited or fragile, and may make sudden or instant dismissals difficult. In this context it is not difficult to understand why most of the trainees were not given a contract or appointment letter. The two women (both from SkillConnect) who did receive written documents from the employer were working as interns, and since their engagement with the salon was only a very temporary one (six months) the

salons did not have any hesitation in providing a document in which their terms and conditions and tenure as interns were spelt out.

Table 7.7: Information on provision of contract letter to beauty respondents

Provided with contract or appointment letter	2
Not provided with contract or appointment letter yet	12
Information unavailable	20
Total	**34**

Table 7.8: Expected salary and post-training salary of beauty respondents

Expected salary	**Respondents**	**Salary received**	**Respondents**
Rs. 7000 and below	1	Rs. 7000 and below	4
Rs. 7001- Rs. 15000	20	Rs. 7001- Rs. 15000	7
Rs. 15001- Rs. 30,000	4	Rs. 15001- Rs. 30,000	0
No specific expectations	5	No salary (internship)	4
		Unemployed	15
Information unavailable	4	Information unavailable	4
Total	**34**	**Total**	**34**

The case studies presented below show that several trainees who found jobs were dismissed by their employers without any notice period. A few found it difficult to find alternate employment as they did not have even a work certificate from their former employers. The refusal of salon owners/managers to provide the new employees with contracts highlights not only the unregulated character of the beauty industry, but also explains the high rate of turnover in the sector. As Table 7.8 indicates, the earned wages fell far short of trainees' expectations. With low starting salaries and no security of tenure, paid leave or other social- insurance, young employees have little motivation to stay in a job without a minimum contract period to ensure even a limited term of employment.

7.1.4 Case studies of migrant beauty workers

From the cohort of 11 migrant beauty trainees, three were successful in getting placed in beauty salons in Bengaluru, while four had to return to their places of origin due to family commitments and one married migrant trainee had not yet received any offer of placement. As mentioned above, for all trainees the dream was to find a position in a salon in Bangalore. What were the factors that enabled a few to stay back in the city, while others returned to their hometown/village?

Focusing on the three trainees who were working in salons in Bengaluru, we found that they had varied work experiences. 'Chitra' was the most fortunate trainee, having been placed in a salon with relatively good working conditions and compensation. Chitra's family lives in Chitradurga. Her father, formerly a garment industry worker in Hosur, is now cultivating a small piece of land which he inherited. She has been working in the salon for the past 1.5 years. Starting at Rs. 5,000 p.m., her earnings (salary plus incentive) rose after six months to around Rs. 12,000-13,000 on average per month. The owner provides rented accommodation for the five women employees of this salon and partially helps with their food costs. Chitra works six days a week. She said that she is happy with the work in the salon and optimistic about her future aspirations: *'I am planning to continue working in the salon for two years and then would decide if I should continue working in salons or start one myself'*. However, Chitra's positive work experience is an unusual case, as the owner of the salon appeared to be exceptionally generous in the compensation package that he offered – decent wages, free accommodation and some support for expenses.

The second migrant trainee is Sharanya, mentioned above. She joined the Move Up beauty training programme in 2017 and had been working in the salon for more than six months. She received Rs. 4000 p.m. as salary in addition to food and accommodation. During follow-up interviews, she said that she had not received the complete salary for the initial months as she had frequently taken leave to visit her village for family emergencies. Further, she was only asked to attend to services like pedicure and manicure, although she was supposed to get trained in other services by the senior staff. Her family is not very happy with her job or the compensation she receives, so they have asked her to return to the village. However, she remarked:

> *I don't want to go to my village and work. I am facing some issues here with food, stay, etc, but I want to continue working here. I came to the skill centre with the intention to work and stay in Bangalore. Therefore, I would stay in Bangalore and make a living as a beautician itself. I will stay here as long as I can tolerate the conditions and I trust that I have a good tolerating capacity.*

The third migrant case study is Savithiri from Koppal district. She was working in the same salon as Suvarna and had the same working conditions and compensation. However, she was fired by the salon owner:

> *One day the owner asked me to stay back in the salon and finish cleaning as the housekeeping staff wasn't there. I did so, and after completing work, at around 10 pm, he*

called me and said that he didn't like the way I worked and therefore asked me to leave the next day. He gave me my salary and asked me to leave. Earlier there have been times when he had scolded me for being slow in learning, but he has also appreciated me for my work at times. I didn't expect that he would ask me to leave.

Savithiri went home the following day and returned to Bengaluru when a friend referred her to a salon owned and run by a woman. She now works there for seven days a week. The owner has accommodated the staff in a room in her house and provides food. Savithiri was offered the same compensation as before, i.e., Rs.4000 p.m. with food and accommodation. However, since the salon was new, they did not have many customers. After a month, the owner shut the salon and asked the staff to stay and support her with household chores. One of the girls was sent to the owner's parents' house to work. The erstwhile salon owner eventually sent both Savithri and her co-worker back to their respective villages and did not pay them anything for the work that they had done. Later, during a follow-up conversation, Savithiri said that she had returned to the first salon from which she had been fired and the owner had agreed to accommodate her in another salon in his chain.

None of these three women received any kind of contract or offer letter, nor were they entitled to any employment benefits such as PF and ESI. As the discussion below reveals, urban-based young women face similar arbitrary dismissals, low salaries and unregulated working conditions. However, the cases above underline the specific vulnerabilities of rural young woman, recently arrived in Bangalore city and seeking to make a living and a life in a sector that is completely unmonitored.

7.1.5 Impact on women in the minority community

Going beyond the rural-urban divide, what is the broader impact that skills training can have on underprivileged women, who have not had opportunities for higher education and have little economic or other resources? As Muslim women constituted a significant proportion of the cohort (10 out of 34), we use this profile as a small window to understand the impact of skills training in a community where women have traditionally been at a disadvantage in terms of education and employment. All of these Muslim trainees were from SkillConnect. The outlet of SkillConnect which we studied was located in North Bangalore, in a locality which includes many low-income households of which Muslims constitute a significant number, which explains the significant number of Muslim girls in the cohort. In terms of the impact, however, seven out of the 10 were found to be unemployed following training. The reasons for this varied from constraints relating to family and community (not allowed to work in a unisex salon, relocated after marriage, or quit after internship). We also found

that the process of training and job placement offered little by way of particular attention to the needs of vulnerable women of this minority community.

The case of 'Abiha Taj' highlights the blind spots of the skills training centre. Shy and soft spoken, Abiha wears a burqa. A school drop-out at class 8, orphaned in her teens, and part of a large, lower-middle class Muslim family living in south Bangalore, Abiha was married off at age 20 but was given the triple talaq by her husband a few months after marriage. During the time when she returned to her brother's house and filed for divorce and alimony, she attended the three-month beautician's course at SkillConnect. Thereafter, although she found work in two successive parlours, she was dismissed from each of them within a month or so. Shunned by her brother's family, she was on the point of entering a madrassa for shelter when the ISEC research team contacted SkillConnect on her behalf and asked that them to assist her in finding a job. The management at SkillConnect responded positively and asked her to get in touch with her former trainer; however, the trainer, instead of helping her, reprimanded her for speaking to researchers about the organization. As it appeared that no help would be forthcoming from SkillConnect, the ISEC research team contacted the director of Allure Institute, who immediately found Abiha a position in an Allure salon not far from her house. However, Abiha was dismissed from this salon as she could not pass the initial tests. Eventually, she used a contact which she had developed in this salon to get a job in another salon, where she is earning Rs.15,000 per month.

At one level, Abiha's case suggests that her personal inefficiencies at work, and the deeply disturbing experience of an abusive marriage and the prospect of being shelterless, were serious impediments to her ability to develop into a professional beautician. On the other side, her case also highlights the indifference of the training process: Abiha had not been able to get a certificate from SkillConnect, which led to her being dismissed from her first two jobs. Finally, the fact that her former trainer did not respond positively to her predicament highlighted that the training process is seen by training centres as a mechanism to churn out numbers (critical for sustaining government and CSR grants), while the crucial element of mentoring and hand holding post-training – essential for a young, unskilled, resourceless and vulnerable group of women – is not really part of their mandate or functioning.

'Asma Sadiya' met us in a café, where she arrived on her own bike dressed like any other young woman of her age (28) in jeans and T-shirt. Following her 12th standard examination, Asma taught in schools and had earned a Montessori training certificate. She then worked in a BPO (business process outsourcing unit) for six months, and at another private company for another six months, earning as much as Rs. 18,000 to Rs. 20,000 per month. But she left these jobs because of conflicts with what she described as harsh managers. Eventually she joined the SkillConnect course in beauty as she had

always been interested in this domain. After training, she interned at a prominent branded chain salon and was straightaway appointed as manager of a salon.

Her work entailed opening and closing the salon, being at her desk for ten hours, assigning beauticians to clients, making bills, taking payments, and generally being in charge. Her salary was Rs. 8000 per month, with no other benefits, and with a weekly off not on the weekend. If she did any overtime, she was entitled to Rs. 100 extra, which was adjusted if she took any half day off. She had not received any offer letter or any kind of contract. Moreover, she had a two-hour commute each day on her bike. There were some complaints about her regarding using the salon products, as well as mismanaging the allotment of work. Eventually she left the job because of the low salary and the long commute (according to her). When we met her, she was waiting to get married to her boyfriend who was posted in Dubai, and she was hoping to open her own independent salon there.

Asma was an atypical case for us. Her mother is a schoolteacher and her father is a car mechanic. Asma's only sister married at 15, has three children, and wears a burqa. Asma had struck a different path for herself despite coming from a conservative family, remaining unmarried till 28. Asma's experience at the salon where she was employed highlights the relatively low wages despite being a 'manager', the long working hours, and most importantly the fact that she had no contract – underlining the completely unregulated character even of branded chain salons. Asma finished her stint as a beauty parlour manager without even a certificate of experience.

7.1.6 From slums to salons

In a few cases, training and employment proved to be an effective vehicle for upward mobility. Two of the young women, 'Bhavika' and 'Aditi', who were employed in Allure salons had been fortunate enough to be able to attend an NGO-run school where they received free education. Located in south-central Bangalore, this school caters mostly to the large number of slums around the Lalbagh area. As the school has a tie up with Allure Institute, these two girls could access free training and thereafter found employment in Allure salons. Hailing from families where their parents had worked as BBMP cleaners and water-carriers – work at the very bottom of the urban informal services sector – these girls had made the transition to workplaces in the sophisticated space of beauty salons. Drawing monthly incomes of Rs. 8000-10,000 provided them with a certain sense of confidence. Yet their lives and livelihoods posed difficult challenges. Emerging from low income localities every day into a very different work-world, these young women had a deep-rooted desire to get away from the slum-like areas in which they had grown up and still lived. But the beauty industry was looked upon with suspicion by their families and communities, as in such localities parlours also function as brothels.

For these young women, then, their lives and their livelihoods were marked by sharp contradictions. While the training had transported them almost to a different world, many insecurities related mainly to absence of contract and other employment related benefits (such as medical leave) laced their work lives with anxiety and insecurity. The two young women who had become beauticians via free schooling and free training in a sense represent both the promise that skills training can hold out to the urban poor, as well as the contingent and fragile character of the livelihood that is offered.

7.1.7 Conclusion - beauty work

It is difficult to make any generalizations about employment in the beauty industry in the absence of a larger data set. However, we highlight a few tentative points here. Our research indicates that young migrant women shared a clear aspiration to become city dwellers, and they saw their training in beauty as a possible vehicle to achieve this aspiration. As discussed in section 3, Move-up made focused efforts to mobilize rural youth to join their training programme in Bangalore, with the clearly stated goal of transforming rural youth into city-based workers. Of the migrant women in our cohort who underwent beauty training at Move-up, their aspirations to live and work in Bangalore matched the training centre's promises of employment and a better life in the city. But their post-training trajectory appeared to be a matter of chance, in which the dynamics of unregulated employment played a key role. The trainees who left for home did so primarily due to family compulsion. While in one case a particularly employee-friendly salon owner made it possible for his migrant workers to settle into the job as well as life in the city, in other cases the low incomes and instability arising from quick and sudden dismissals led the young women to return to their villages. Although the training centre had a post-training hand-holding system in place, the young women who were obviously struggling with low salaries, unexpected dismissals, and poor working conditions were not able to access any assistance or support from the centre.

The other important lacunae stemmed from the structure of the industry itself. As the discussion above shows, only two interns received some kind of written document from the salon regarding their internship. Of those who were employed, none had received a contract. The absence of a contract or offer letter compounded the economic and other vulnerabilities of workers. Moreover, quick and easy dismissals appeared to be a characteristic feature of employment in the beauty sector, which is facilitated by the absence of a contract. It should be highlighted that even in cases where the employee appeared to be well paid and was also provided with accommodation, she was not given a contract. For a young migrant woman, this meant that were she to be suddenly dismissed, she would not only lose her job but also her accommodation and all the other support necessary for her to live

in the city. This situation leaves young women completely at the mercy of their employers, thus significantly sharpening the edge of vulnerability in which they live and work.

Third, the mushrooming of so-called parlours, which could be composed of just the owner with a helper or two, brings to light certain troubling features of this sector, where the salon helper can easily be displaced into the owner's home as domestic help. Thus, while the stated intention of training programmes is indeed to equip unskilled youth to become 'professionals', the outcome could be quite different, in terms of pushing them back into traditional, unskilled, and unorganized domains of work such as domestic service. This again brings to light the flaws in the mentoring and hand-holding systems of the training centres.

Beyond this, an important issue that emerged concerns the quality of training that was imparted. All parlours are organized on the basis of specialized functions offered by different workers. In this context, trainees noted that the training process provided a generalized training in all activities, which was superficial and did not qualify or equip the girls to become a beautician in the 'salon' sense – specialized skills which they would have to learn on the job or through further training. The implicit understanding was that they would be able to learn 'on-the-job' once placed as interns or helpers. However, as one of the trainee-employees told us, *'When senior beauticians are rushing to meet their targets, where do they have time to train us?'* Another employee stated that the opportunity to learn was only by watching seniors doing their work, there was no opportunity to actually practice what they were supposedly learning. In this context, she and other beginners like her did not have access to formal courses for advanced beauty training, as the salons do not provide such opportunities. In summary, the training provided at skills centres thus creates semi-skilled helpers who occupy the lowest rungs in the salon hierarchy. Thus, employment opportunities and wages naturally fall short of what is promised to trainees by the skills centres. Clearly, therefore, the skills imparted in training centers did not provide a suitable platform from which the trainees could embark on a professional career.

Finally, the issue of young women's independent migration raises many questions regarding the regulation of employment, urban housing, security from predatory employers, and so on. These questions cut across sectors in which migrant women are employed, especially predominantly female employment sectors such as readymade garment manufacturing, domestic service, and the beauty and wellness industry. As these sectors expand, women from rural and semi-urban areas are indeed getting access to employment opportunities not available in their hometowns or villages. At the same time, the quality of employment, and of life in the city, generate many questions about the future of women's employment in the urban service economy. What this small segment of the study highlights – and which is corroborated in our other sector studies – is that policies and programmes for skill

development remain oblivious to the fact that post-training placement is inevitably in the lower rungs of the urban services sector (both informal and 'formal'), which provides low incomes and very little job security. There is an urgent need to integrate skills, employment and regulation policies to ensure that young workers, after going through skill training programmes, do not fall into the undefined space of informal work where they are completely at the mercy of employers.

7.2 Organized retail and unorganized labour

The second segment of the service economy where we carried out extended research in Bangalore was organized retail – a major and rapidly growing source of employment for urban service workers.

Retail is considered to be one of the most dynamic sectors of the Indian economy with great potential for employment, with a projected growth in the retail market from an estimated USD 600 billion in 2015 to USD 850 billion by 2020 (Deloitte 2013: 5). According to one report, retail accounts for over 14 percent of India's GDP and around 7 percent of total employment in India (Deloitte 2013: 4). By 2021, organized retail – which currently forms 9 percent of all retail (most of which is in the informal sector) – will increase its share to 18 percent, while the share of traditional retail and e-commerce will be 75 percent and 7 percent, respectively (India Brand Equity Foundation 2018). Although it is difficult to get firm figures on employment in organized retail distinct from retail overall, an industry spokesperson estimated the total workforce in the sector to be about 14 million.[25]

While an emerging body of work on service sector workers has explored questions of labour and subjectivity across several domains (Gooptu 2013a, 2013b; Upadhya & Vasavi 2008), and there are substantial studies of call centre and BPO workers in India (Mankekar & Gupta 2016, 2017; Mirchandani 2012), little ethnographic or sociological research has been carried out on retail workers in India (but see Maitra & Maitra 2018). This sub-project was a small attempt to fill this gap.

Because we were not able to conduct follow-up interviews with most students from the SM/ Retail / AA courses in our original cohort (see section 4), our cohort of retail workers was constructed separately by approaching workers directly at their places of work or through our existing contacts. We also requested HR mangers of retail stores to allow us access to a sample of employees for structured interviews, but did not receive permission to conduct research. Indeed, it was difficult to

[25] According to a Knight Frank Report (2015), 21 percent of the total retail in Bangalore is modern 'brick and mortar', while the shares of non-modern retail and e-retail are 76 percent and 2 percent, respectively. The modern retail market in the city is dominated by regional players who occupy 41 percent of the store space, while the national and international players occupy 32 percent and 17 percent, respectively, and local 10 percent (Knight Frank 2015).

get interviews even with HR managers of large departmental and branded stores. Most interviews with employees were carried out in common spaces in the mall or in the staff canteen, where we would be inconspicuous - as many workers felt constrained to speak to researchers.

The difficulties we faced in conducting research in this sector shows that retail organizations are particularly reluctant to share information or provide access to their employees – itself an important research finding. As will become clear in this section, conditions of employment in organized retail are far from ideal, and both workers and managers have little free time to sit for interviews, and retail organizations in general are reluctant to share information about their labour practices – suggesting that all is not well in this sector. Even the mall management was leery of researchers – once when our field researcher was talking to a worker in a common space, she was approached by a security guard and requested to take permission from the mall management before conducting any further research in the mall.

At the outset we conducted a series of short interviews, and this was followed by a series of longer interviews with retail workers. Our final data set includes in-depth interviews with **ten** retail workers in Bangalore, and shorter interviews with **22** additional workers from several large format retail stores as well as smaller stores and stalls in Bangalore malls, for a total of 32. In our cohort of 32 retail employees, 27 were women and five were men. Except for one, all respondents were working in malls.

In this section we present our findings from these interviews as well as information gained from key informant interviews (HR managers, industry representatives, and others).

7.2.1 Socio-economic profile of retail workers

This section presents an overview of the socio-economic profile of the cohort of retail workers and their migration histories.

Information on the entire cohort is summarized in Table 7.9, while Table 7.10 presents a snapshot of the educational attainment, caste and previous work experience of the ten in-depth case study respondents.

Migration histories

Of the 32 respondents, half were migrants, all from rural areas or small towns of Karnataka (Tumkur, Mandya, Hassan, Koppal, Mangalore, Chikabalapur, and Bagalkot) or from West Bengal or northeastern states (Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura). Most mentioned that their families owned land in the village and that someone in the family still cultivated the land. Of the ten case study respondents, three had come from outside Bangalore while one respondent's family had settled in Bangalore

recently and a second respondent's family had moved to the city from a small town near Bangalore a few years ago. Five workers reported that they were raised in Bangalore, and several were second- or third-generation residents in the city.

Regarding their reasons for migration, most said that they had managed to study up to a certain level but were not able to find employment opportunities in their hometowns so came to Bangalore in search of work. Several added that their families were in debt due to a crop failure or drought, or because of some other financial exigencies, so they were expected to find employment to help support their families. In several cases, these workers were fully responsibility for providing for their families. Several said that they came to the city with the hope of finding a source of stable income as agriculture is no longer viable. These narratives illustrate the well-known issue of the agrarian crisis across several regions, which is pushing youth to the cities in search of jobs.

As is often the case with migrant workers, most migrants in the retail cohort took assistance from their city-based networks to land jobs – friends who were working in the same field or relatives who had come to the city earlier and had accommodation. But several had arrived in the city without any contacts and walked into large mall stores enquire about vacancies, were interviewed and landed the job.

Table 7.9: Socio-economic characteristics of retail respondents (N=32)

Gender	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	
Number of respondents	5	27	32	
Age	**18-21**	**22-25**	**26 and above**	
Number	10	13	9	
Marital status	**Married**	**Unmarried**		
Number	9	23	32	
Place of origin	**Bangalore**	**Rural KA / other town of KA**	**Other state**	
Number	14	12	6	
Education	**10th and below**	**PUC pass**	**Pursuing/ completed degree or professional course**	**Master's degree**
Number	7	13	10	2
Work experience	**Less than 1 year**	**1-2 years**	**More than 2 and less than 5 years**	**5 years or more**
Number	7	9	5	11

Religion/ community	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	
Number	27	2	3	

Table 7.10: Snapshot of case study respondents - retail sector

Pseudonym	Age	Caste/Community	Education	Current position	Previous work experience
Laxman	35	Christian/ST	PUC	7 years with a designer brand at a large retail store	2 years at a brand outlet
Mridul	21	Hindu/ Kshatriya	Pursuing B.com	1 year at a large retail store in the mall	6 months at different outlet of same brand
Raji	21	Hindu/SC	BA (incomplete)	Had just quit working after 9 months in a brand outlet	Total 4 months experience at two different department stores
Rebecca	22	Christian-Protestant	PUC	2 years, with a break, at a large retail store	No prior experience
Renu	29	Hindu/OBC	PUC	4 years with a popular cosmetic brand at a large retail store in the mall	1 year with a cosmetic brand outlet
Rachel	19	Christian	PUC	5-6 months with a popular cosmetic brand; has to work in three different stores as she is a replacement worker	1 year at small cosmetic brand outlet
Sri	30	Hindu/SC	BA	2-3 months at a standalone store in central business district	6 months at a large format departmental retail store/supermarket
Srilekha	22	Hindu/OBC	BA (incomplete)	1 year with a lingerie brand at a large retail store in the mall	6 months at private company
Sushmita	29	Hindu	Matriculation	1 year with a cosmetic brand at a large retail store	10-11 years in five different cosmetic brands
Veena	21	Hindu/OBC	BCom (incomplete)	1 year with a confectionery outlet in the mall	1 year at two fast food outlets

Socio-economic status

The parents of the non-migrant workers were typically engaged in industrial or low-end service jobs such as working in garment factories, domestic work, driving, painting, or running small businesses, while most of the migrants' families were engaged in agriculture. However, agriculture was not the primary source of income for these families, who had diversified into other occupations. Most older siblings of these workers were also engaged in service sector jobs such as computer repair, computer operator, and retail, while a few had small businesses.

Most of the Bangalore-based families owned a house and a vehicle. Most migrants in our sample were from rural areas and reported that their families owned a house and agricultural land in their villages. These findings data suggest that our retail respondents largely come from the urban and rural lower-middle and working classes, but their families were not below the poverty line. However, their households were clearly in financial need, as most of our respondents said that they had to quit studies after matriculation or PUC due to financial constraints. Most started working at a young age (18 or 19, or as young as 16 in one case) to supplement the family income. While the households of most of our core respondents included another working member, in the larger group there were a few examples of workers who were the primary or sole earners for their households – including several unmarried women (see section 7.2.5 below).

With regard to caste/ community identity, of the ten workers in the case study cohort, three were SCs and two were dominant caste OBCs (Gowda and Shetty), one was ST, and two were Christian (Table 7.10). Of the remaining, one worker belonged to the Kshatriya caste and the other did not disclose her caste. The larger sample of 32 workers also had a high representation from OBC and SC communities.

Education

Most respondents in our larger sample of 32 workers had completed Class 12/ PUC, while a few had started working after completing matriculation. Despite laws that restrain employers from hiring people who have not yet attained majority, two of our respondents reported that they had started working at the ages of 15 and 16, respectively, due to financial problems following the death of a parent. Interestingly, two respondents had completed Master's degrees in commerce and had taken up the job at the mall after having worked in other jobs previously. They mentioned that these earlier jobs were short term and contractual in nature, so they both had taken up retail jobs in the hope of career advancement, given their higher degrees. Most workers with 10th or 12th class education said that they had to start earning to support their families, and as there were not many opportunities or jobs suitable to their qualifications they had started working at the mall. Most respondents said that

they had wanted to continue their studies, but several responded that they were not academically inclined and so chose to work instead.

Of our smaller case study cohort, one migrant respondent had come to the city after completing a Bachelor's degree and trying his hand at government exams, while three had enrolled for BA but were unable to complete the course. One worker was still pursuing a Bachelor's course in commerce alongside working at the mall. He could attend the fortnightly tests by accumulating his weekly offs and requesting the management for leave during his semester exams.

7.2.2 Working in retail: Employment conditions and employee experiences

The retail sector is known for its high attrition rates, and accordingly the workforce is highly mobile and unstable. According to several informants, employees easily change jobs in pursuit of a better employer or higher salary – often for just a Rs. 500 pay hike. In this context, HR managers are always in 'hire mode', and it is relatively easy for a young person with the minimum qualifications (usually 10th pass) to get a job in a large departmental store or a mall. These characteristics were reflected in the narratives of our respondents about their employment histories and work experiences.

Finding a job: hiring practices

Large retail stores hire workers through several routes, from walk-in interviews and job portals to newspaper and social media ads and employee referrals. According to HR managers, stores do not often hire staff from training centres such as Pragati and Move-up, which can provide only a few candidates at a time whereas the big department stores require large numbers of candidates.

Most of the retail workers interviewed had found their jobs through their social networks, mostly peers (friends from college, neighbours). A few had heard that big stores in malls are always in need of workers and pay handsomely, and so had just walked into the mall to enquire about job opportunities. After applying, in most cases they were interviewed immediately and hired. One respondent landed the job after applying through a job recruitment portal, while another was hired after completing on-the-job training where she had been placed by a training institute, after she convinced her supervisors of her competence. While most workers were hired directly by the stores, a few were working as 'temps' hired out by agencies such as Kelly Services.

Training

Although skill training centres such as Move-up and Pragati offer courses such as Sales Management and Retail, meant to prepare workers for these jobs, the vast majority of retail employees in the country do not undergo any training, except for short induction and on-the-job training by their employers.

Indeed, HR managers were not very enthusiastic about hiring from skill centres, as they did not see much added value in 'trained' candidates (see section 4.4.2). However, one advantage in hiring from skill centres (which recruit underprivileged youth for training), is that they are more in need of a job and so are seen as more 'loyal':

> *They are very loyal. It is not right to say this, but they are in need of a job and they would not switch easily. We are very confident of our internal development programme. They are at the beginning of a career. We feel once we give them a direction, they will stay with us. We have seen the success rates also – that the students stay if they are taken care of. That works for us also as they stay with us for a longer duration. Though we invest too much initially, the result is good at the end of the day – for them as well as for us.*

This narrative reinforces the argument that skill centres cater to the needs of employers as much as (or more than) the students, by providing them with 'loyal', relatively passive and malleable human resources – workers who may be willing to settle for low pay and onerous working conditions.

Of our ten case study respondents, only one had taken a training course in retail – at a government run DDU-GKY training centre. This was a five-month course that involved an on-the-job training (OJT) component; trainees were placed in stores to work for two months after the classroom training. However, after completing OJT, this worker was placed in a similar role and level as those who were hired without any training, and she was even paid less than her untrained counterparts. This story illustrates the point that training does not seem to add any value or salary premium for retail workers. This belies the official discourse of Skill India and the mandate of the Retailers Association's Sector Skill Council (RASCI), which is to promote training to upskill the workforce and has evolved elaborate standards and protocols for worker training.[26] In reality, formal skill training is hardly valued by employers in this sector.

However, retail stores claim that they provide periodic short training sessions to employees on subjects that are most relevant to them – one HR manager mentioned two hours per week as a standard. Most of the workers employed in large departmental or brand stores we interviewed had indeed attended some training sessions, especially an orientation course of three days to a week where they learn about different aspects of retail sales in general, about the brand (products, material or ingredients, style or type, the rules of the shop floor, and soft skills such as effective communication, discipline and time management. Several had undergone refresher courses, typically for one or two days every year, which covered topics such as communication, 'retail mathematics' and grooming.

[26] See: https://rasci.in/

Within communication, workers are told how to handle customers and convince them to buy a product. In the session on grooming, they were told about the importance of appearance and how to groom themselves for better sales. Apart from these general themes, one respondent recalled attending a training session on the latest fashion trends, where he was apprised about global trends, fabrics and prints that are in fashion. However, several respondents had never undergone training. Even among those who had attended such training sessions, most felt that they had learned more about customer service by observing their peers and interacting with customers on a daily basis.

Compensation and employment conditions

Although all of the workers we interviewed were employed in corporate or formal sector companies, and labour laws (such as the Shops & Establishments Act) are supposed to govern their working conditions, we found the terms of employment and labour practices in these companies to be quite varied. As expected, employment in this sector is marked by several elements of 'informality'; in particular, many respondents did not have proper employment letters or contracts, and the working hours and other conditions often did not adhere to statutory requirements.

On being asked about the nature of work in retail stores, most workers would comment at first that the sector affords them a stable income along with incentives for good performance (linked to achievement of daily and monthly targets). But later in the conversation they would often admit that they are unhappy with the working conditions, especially the compensation and the strenuous nature of the work.

The range of basic pay for workers in our sample was between Rs. 11,000 and 15,000. The range in smaller and single brand outlet workers was Rs. 11,000 to 13,000 and at bigger stores Rs. 12,000 to 16,000. The total take-home pay (including incentives and minus deductions) for most workers was between Rs. 13,000 and 18,000. One worker who was employed as a Senior Fashion Consultant with a designer and had nine years of work experience reported a much higher basic pay of Rs. 30,000. On top of the basic pay, salaries always have a component of 'variable pay' or incentives, which is based on performance or achievement of sales targets as fixed by the store. Of the gross salary, deductions are made under heads such as Provident Fund (PF), employee insurance and professional tax.

'Hema', the HR manager of a store belonging to a large retail chain, told us that 'freshers' get Rs. 10,000 in hand, while the 'brands' (which run their own counters or outlets in the store) offer Rs. 12-15,000. This is one reason why their employees are always being 'poached' by brands, leading to a high rate of employee attrition (discussed below). The salary structure includes basic pay plus target-linked incentives, and provident fund and ESI are provided as per law.

'Sumitra', a top executive of a large staffing company, noted that most retail workers (apart from those in very high-end stores, who are generally from the Northeast) are mostly from semi-urban or rural backgrounds and are the first in their families to seek such jobs. A large proportion belong to the BPL category, she felt, which is why pay of Rs.10,000-15,000 makes sense for them.

Of the ten workers in our core cohort, five had not been given appointment letters or written contracts and two were employed by third-party staffing companies. Several were only vaguely aware of the contents of their appointment letters or the benefits to which they were entitled, and said that they had learned about these only through the deductions made in their salary slips. Although most reported that they are entitled to ESI (Employees' State Insurance Scheme), the cumbersome procedure for getting the card dissuaded most from applying, and they also did not feel a need for it. However, one worker had benefitted from the free hospitalization and support money of Rs. 1 lakh available through ESI when she had her child.

Without proper appointment letters or written contracts, retail workers are liable to be dismissed without notice. Most workers in our cohort felt that they had no job security, and the possibility of being fired for a small infraction, for failing to generate enough sales, or no reason at all, loomed large in their minds. However, only one worker reported having witnessed a colleague being dismissed from work as a consequence of disciplinary action.

Most workers were unaware of the number of days of leave they are allowed; several reported that they were allowed to take leave (in addition to their weekly days off) only for 'emergencies'. They reported that team leaders and managers would discourage workers from taking leave often. Their weekly day off is allowed only on weekdays, that is, from Monday to Friday, and managements expect workers to be flexible in this regard. Managers take into account the availability of relieving or replacement staff before deciding on an employee's day off each week. Several workers reported that they had worked for two weeks in a row without the required day off as replacement staff was not available, or due to work pressure.

Working hours

The work of a retail sales attendant is physically strenuous. After getting to work in the morning, employees are required to arrange display items (in our cohort, mostly clothes) according to the colour scheme in their stall/counter, and check and display appropriate signage indicating MRP and discounts for the season. Most stores allocate 10-15 minutes at the beginning of the shift for their staff members to work on their appearance, which is also part of the morning routine before the store opens. In addition, most stores schedule daily briefings wherein the departmental or store manager apprises workers about targets – daily, weekly and monthly – followed by a short, often evocative call for

'converting walk-ins into customers'. After these preliminaries, the store is opened for customers. Once the store is open, workers have to attend to customers and rearrange display products throughout the day, replacing stock that is taken to the trial rooms and keeping their displays neat.

Taking into account the time workers have to put in before the store opens and after working hours, most of our respondents spent 9 to 10 hours per day at work. They were expected to be at the store between 9.30 am and 10 am to prepare for opening, and they usually could not leave before 8 pm. (These long hours are despite the fact that retail workers are ostensibly governed by usual labour regulations with maximum 8-hour shifts.). They usually took lunch breaks of 45 minutes to an hour and tea breaks of 15 to 30 minutes, once or twice a day. Speaking about the extra hours that workers are expected to put in, a respondent observed, *'The field (retail) always requires extra work and one is expected to come early, go late'.*

Working conditions

While on the floor, workers are expected to be on their feet at all times (except during breaks), and the layout of stores is designed in such a way that they cannot sit down. *'The management is aware that we can't stand the whole day, so they don't take us to task if we sit in trial rooms occasionally'*, noted one worker. But she added that the managers are strict during sale events, when everyone is expected to be on their toes. Sale events are marked by increased customer footfall, due to which workers typically attend to two or three times the number of customers than usual. As they have to constantly be on their toes, such events are physically strenuous and emotionally demanding. Such discount sales are usually held three or four times a year, in December and March or April and coinciding with major festivals.

Another area of discontent concerned the repetitive and unchallenging nature of work. One respondent noted, *'Retail is a waste of time. There is nothing new to learn and anyone can do this kind of work'*, hinting that it is not challenging enough. Job dissatisfaction was most discernible amongst respondents with BA degrees, since they had expected to land an 'office' job but had to settle for a 'sales job'.

Apart from low compensation, strenuous and monotonous work, and long working hours, workers also articulated discontent about job insecurity, strict supervisors, difficulty in achieving targets, and general work pressure. The following excerpts from interview notes capture this sentiment and reveal much about the nature of work in the sector: *'The work is double - salary is less.'*

No other job teaches one about adversity more than retail; I have learned to survive adversity here … after work, I would only look forward to going to bed at night.

Sumitra noted that urban youth are averse to working in the sector, since apart from low wages they will have to stand for 12 hours a day. When we expressed surprise that the hours are so long, she pointed out that they have 8-hour shifts as per law but end up spending 12 hours in the workplace as they are expected to come in advance for briefing, arranging items and planning. Moreover, they are not provided with a place to sit down while at work.

Chasing targets, self-management, and work discipline

The difficulty of achieving ever elusive targets was another issue for workers. Incentives are linked to the achievement of sales targets, which are fixed by the brands or the head office of department stores. Typically, every department is given a sales target to achieve, and their progress is monitored by the department manager/team leader who oversees operations and suggests ways in which workers can increase sales.

There are gradations within the incentive structure. Most respondents noted that they could only achieve targets (and so earn incentives) for three to six months of the year; during other periods when business is sluggish it is difficult to reach the targets. All respondents were vociferous about the constant pressure put on them by the management to 'convert walk-ins into customers', especially if their department consistently failed to achieve targets. They said that managers are only considerate when an employee has a 'genuine reason' for not achieving the target, such as insufficient quantity or inadequate size options. However, the most cited reason is a low level of 'walk-ins', and most managers are sympathetic when workers encounter such challenges. While several respondents mentioned being reprimanded for not achieving the target, another had overheard the manager threatening a worker with dismissal because he had failed to achieve the stipulated target.

Work discipline is imposed through a variety of methods. Most workers said that they were expected to be available on social media such as WhatsApp, where they are supposed to join one or two groups (for brand and store) and where they report their log in and log out times and put in requests for leave. These forums are also active spaces for department, brand and store workers, where information related to sale, targets, availability of replacement workers, and daily, weekly and monthly reports are disseminated. In one case, where a worker is the only brand employee manning a counter in a department store, she was required to take a photograph of herself at work and share it on the WhatsApp group. Such practices are to ensure that workers are adhering to the rules of grooming. One respondent was given a tablet by her supervisor which she was required to keep with her at all

times, as a monitoring device. She was constantly checking messages on the tablet even during her interview.

In addition, floor staff are made responsible for the stock which is under their control, and may face disciplinary action in case any items are missing. All products sold are recorded in the IT system; this record is checked against the physical stock every morning, and the closing stock for the previous day is tallied with the opening stock. The difference, if any, has to either reflect in the items that a cashier may have missed entering into the system, or should appear in the list of discarded items. Workers are reprimanded if they are not able to explain any discrepancy.

Performing aesthetic labour

As several scholars have argued, customer-facing sales and service jobs require workers to invest their selves, their bodies and their personalities in the labour process – by performing affective, emotional or aesthetic labour (Elias, *et al.* 2017; Gershon 2014; Maitra & Maitra 2018; Mankekar & Gupta 2016). In interviews, our retail respondent spoke about the pressure that they constantly face from managers and team leaders to be 'presentable'. They are frequently told about the importance of appearance, of wearing a neat uniform and clean shoes, being well turned out, and so on. For women, this means tying up their hair in a bun with bobby pins to keep the hair in place, while men must keep their beards trimmed. Dangling earrings and other very conspicuous jewellery are not allowed. Wearing make-up appropriately is mandatory for staff managing the counters of cosmetic brands, and some other stores also monitor women's make-up and hairstyles. Along with this, workers are told to always wear a smile and have a pleasing manner while at the counter.

Several women workers mentioned that in stores where workers are required to punch in with the required 'grooming', security personnel had been assigned the task of scrutinizing staff, both men and women. These guards check to see if workers are well turned out before allowing them into the store.

Gender at work

When we asked about the effects of gender in the workplace, most women respondents maintained that career advancement for all workers, including women, depends on performance, and that the opportunities are the same for both genders. However, when asked about their ambitions, such as whether they would like to apply for higher positions, even women with bachelor's degrees did not envision themselves in such positions. They explained that one may find women in such roles, but the job itself is very demanding and individuals in such positions are responsible for the performance of those reporting to them. Although the compensation is higher, most women felt that the responsibility

and pressure that accompanies such a promotion is too much. Several women noted that they are not looking for a future in the sector, or that they would not work after marriage, but considered the job as a temporary measure to supplement the family income in the interim, while also building their skills sets.

Like their male counterparts, most women spent between nine to ten hours on the shop floor. Although they complained about long working hours, several were appreciative of the 'accommodative' nature of their team leaders and managers who had intervened to ensure that they would not have to work the second shift, which is between 12 pm and 9 pm for most stores. The HR manager of a large multi-brand store said that they only put men on the late shift, since they would have to provide transport for women going home after dark. However, this constraint results in men earning more money via incentives, as customer footfall is higher in the evenings. In one chain retail store, the HR manager said that they prefer to hire male employees because they need people to work on the second shift, hence 60 percent of their employees are men.

One woman who had spent close to five years in the sector and had availed of maternity leave and benefits offered by her employer was especially appreciative of this facility. She got paid leave of six months in accordance with the rules of the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 and also received Rs. 1 lakh. However, another woman with much longer work experience (12 years) and complications in her pregnancy could not avail these benefits as her employer had shut operations during that time. As a result of the complications, she had a premature delivery and eventually lost one of her twins.

Women workers felt that they were at a disadvantage in this sector, given their family obligations. One young mother, despite her 12 years of experience in the retail sector, could not take up an offered promotion to team leader because family members in her marital home were not comfortable with the travel and work pressure that it would entail. A young unmarried woman said that her fiancé's family had reservations about her working at the mall but would not have a problem if she finds work at an office or IT park after marriage. However, she felt that she did not have the requisite qualifications or skills to apply for such positions.

Living and working in the city

A major issue faced by most retail employees – whether migrants or natives of Bangalore – were accommodation and commuting to work. Among the migrants in our cohort, all were staying in rented or paying guest accommodation, or shared accommodation with friends, colleagues or siblings, in areas close to their workplace to reduce commute time. Rents in this central area of Bangalore range from Rs. 1000 to 3500 per person in shared or PG accommodation. In addition, they typically spend

Rs. 2500 to Rs. 3000 for food per month. However, another group of workers preferred paying a little less for accommodation and spending more time commuting, staying in suburban or outlying areas of Bangalore and spending close to two hours each way. One migrant worker in our larger sample stays in Bagalakunte on Tumkur Road, and although the metro runs on this route she did not prefer this option as the fare would have taken up a significant proportion of her salary. As the area where she lives is poorly connected by bus, she has to spend on auto-rickshaws, especially at night.

Most of the Bangalore-based respondents live with their parents or families in older low- and middle-income neighbourhoods in central Bangalore or suburban areas of the city. The majority commute to work by bus, spending 30 minutes to an hour on travel, sometimes having to take two buses as their neighbourhoods did not have good connectivity. Although most had purchased monthly bus passes for Rs. 1050, which is a little less expensive than what one would spend if one had to buy a ticket every day, bus fares in Bangalore are notoriously high, adding to the pressure on their budgets. Two respondents stay with their families on the outskirts of the city, in Nelamangala and Laggere, and typically spend more than two hours per day on their commute due to traffic congestion on this route.

Sumitra said that Bangalore workers will bargain with their employers so that they get placed in a store closer to their homes, as this reduces the commute time:

> *Mapping the geographies of location is important - for minimum wages, the employee is spending Rs. 5000 to 6000 for the commute and anyway doing 16-17 hours outside home. In this context they are bound to give up – the resilience of these kids is low.*

7.2.3 A future in retail? Aspirations and pathways of (im)mobility

Perhaps as a response to the onerous and precarious employment conditions in the industry, retail is not viewed by many respondents as a long-term 'career', but rather as a way to make some money while pursuing other objectives. Others did not see any other options given their educational backgrounds.

Retail sales theoretically has a potential career path for employees who stick to the job. The entry level position is called Sales Associate (SA), Fashion Consultant (FC), or Fashion Associate (FA). The next levels are Senior Associate/Consultant, Team Leader, and Department Manager. A Department Manager is typically responsible for overseeing operations in the particular department and reports to the store manager. Some stores also have the position of Assistant Department Manager. We got varying responses to our question about the time it takes for SAs or FCs to move up the ladder. According to one HR manager, they can become a Team Leader after two years, followed by Supervisor, Assistant Department Manager, Department Manager, Store Manager, Area Manager and Regional Manager, in that order. (Not all of these levels and roles are found in all

organizations.) Generally, it may take five to seven years to reach a managerial role. But most workers in our cohort were Fashion Consultants or Beauty Advisors (starting position). One worker with almost nine years of experience was still just a Senior Fashion Consultant. Promotions are based on manager feedback and are not time-bound or automatic.

Although most workers in our cohort were able to explain the career pathway that is available in the industry, few could see a future for themselves in retail. They felt that they were not in a position to negotiate for a better role or could not see themselves getting a promotion in the near future. Although they could articulate how much time it would take for them to rise starting level to team leader or department manager, few imagined themselves actually following this path. On being asked about the prospects of promotion or career advancement, respondents said that those with a Bachelor's degree and some experience in the field can expect growth, but those with only PUC or 10th pass educations are at a disadvantage. A respondent with a BA degree said: '*It usually takes three years for a sales executive to graduate to the role of a team leader. Then, one becomes a Department Manager, Regional Area Manager, and Store Manager, in that order*', adding that she hopes to be able to navigate these steps to becoming a manager faster than others. However, most degree holders felt they did not have the required experience or that their degrees did not confer any advantage.

According to an HR manager, *'not many stay around long enough to move up'*. However, we did find a few such cases: a store manager we met had been promoted to the role of supervisor after working as executive/cashier at three stores. In his fourth job as a supervisor, a representative from a bigger brand offered him a higher pay package. He took up this position and was able to become a team leader during his tenure with that company. Then, noticing his diligence and dedication to his work, a manager from a competitor brand approached him with the offer of a higher pay. He took up this position and then another one, where he was made store manager. He continues to be a store manager in his current job. where he receives a higher pay. In total, he has spent 8-9 years in the retail sector, moving up the ladder mainly by changing jobs. However, many employees never see this kind of career progression, and most are likely leave the industry after a few years, in search of more stable employment.

A recurrent theme in respondents' narratives was the insecurity of future employment or the lack of a clear career path. Respondents often said something like: *'There is no future for those in this sector'*. *'Those who are qualified, have a future*'. Speaking about his imagined career trajectory, one employee noted that it typically takes two years for an entry-level salesperson to become a supervisor or manager, if he or she exhibits diligence and competence in addition to having the required qualifications. This expectation is in sharp contrast to how promotions actually work in this sector. A young man working in a large format retail store while also pursuing his B.Com degree felt that even

when he completes the course, it would not open up opportunities for him. Several of his colleagues are college graduates but continue to be at the same level as him. He observed, *'People with a degree are also working with me so I don't think things will be different after this course'*. Others also insisted that career progression depends more on experience than educational attainment.

As noted above, women in particular do not see a future in the industry. An unmarried woman in our cohort, when asked her about her career plans, said that she is to be married soon and will continue in the job only until then. Her fiancé is from a village near Channarayapatna and she said, *'I'll become a village girl after marriage – I won't work'*. She explained that women in villages are expected to stay at home to take care of household chores. As she was going to be working only for another few months, she did not care about getting promoted.

While we do not have a large sample of retail workers from which to assess the prospects of mobility within the sector, interviews with HR managers and trainers suggest that very few workers who join the industry at the entry level progress to management roles, at least not beyond team leader. Recruitment to floor manager and similar positions is often done through 'lateral hires', i.e., by hiring experienced personnel from other companies or sectors (often with MBA or similar degrees). Indeed, HR managers told us that they have little time to invest in training or in mentoring staff, inputs that might help them advance their careers (see following section).

Although few respondents could envision a long-term career in retail, several did view the job as a useful stepping stone to other careers. Several workers articulated the ambition of getting an 'office job' or starting a business venture, stating that they were working in retail sales only to make a living and support their families in the interim. One respondent was pursuing B.Com with the latter goal in mind. A young woman from the Northeast had done her Bachelor's degree and diploma in nursing but did not want to work in healthcare, so joined a retail store. She said that her ambition is to get into the aviation sector, which offers better pay, and was attending interviews during her off days, but she planned to continue working in retail until she lands a job as cabin crew or ground staff. If she fails to get into such a job, she plans to apply for a government position in her hometown.

One case in our cohort is particularly noteworthy as an example of how employees may use retail as a stepping-stone to another career. Laxman, who was handling sales for a designer brand in a large department store, said that he found the work to be very monotonous. If given the opportunity, he wants to engage with the creative aspects of fashion, such as aesthetics or visual merchandising. But his long-term ambition is to start his own design venture, for which he was saving money. He had applied for a small loan from a private bank for this purpose, which had apparently come through. However, he thought that the sanctioned amount would not be sufficient to start the venture he had in mind, so he decided to continue in his current job to save money. However, he was finding it

difficult to save enough out of the Rs. 30,000 he earns. Laxman said that he was waiting for an 'opportunity' (perhaps hinting at some sort of funding or collaboration), and that when this happens his plans would take off. Like Laxman, two women respondents expressed aspirations of starting an enterprise in the future, but until these plans materialize they would continue to work in retail to support their families.

7.2.4 The retail workforce: Footloose and flexible labour

The work histories of our cohort point to the footloose and unstable nature of the workforce. All the respondents had worked in at least one other retail store prior to joining their present job, except for one who was placed at her current workplace by a training centre. Most workers with prior experience had previously worked for six months to two years. Of the more experienced workers, one had worked at two different branches of another cosmetics brand for six months each before joining her present job, and had spent more than five years in this sector. Another had a total experience of nine years, working in two different jobs, while the most experienced person in our sample had worked for a total of 12 years and this was her sixth job. Several had worked for smaller brands or local stores that dealt in groceries before moving on to bigger stores, while others had experience working with other competitor brands and then shifted to the current employer for better pay or working conditions.

'Raji', for example, first worked at a local Jio phone centre but had to leave after three months as the job was temporary. Then she spent a month looking for a job, and finally found one with Bajaj Finance after she chanced upon a 'wanted workers' sign outside the store. In this job the working hours were very long and they were not given days off even on weekends. After quitting that job, she did some advocacy work for an NGO, where someone told about a job in a Max Store. After quitting that job, she joined a local political campaign and was engaged in some 'social work'. During this period she was also looking for a job, and even requested our field researcher for a loan so she could pay a bribe to get a job as a receptionist at a government hospital.

Another case is that of 'Sri', from Koppal, who came to Bangalore in 2016 along with some friends. After attending a couple interviews, he landed a job in a Big Bazaar outlet. However, he found it difficult to sustain himself on the salary of Rs. 9500, and he quit after three months as he was not able to save any money to send home. He then returned to his native place, but then came back to Bangalore in 2018 and has been working in different Bata store.

Finally, 'Veena', who hails from Tumkur but had migrated to Bangalore with her parents, first worked at the Kaati Zone food outlet in Orion Mall for seven months. When the outlet closed, she got a job with Halli Nenapu, a South Indian eatery in another mall, where she worked for a year as a cashier. In this job, she said, there was always pressure to deliver and she did not get her weekly days

off regularly, so she quit. She then joined a bakery outlet in another mall, where she would like to continue working. But at the time of our interview, she was facing opposition from her fiancé's family, who wanted her to quit.

These are just a few examples to illustrate the peripatetic work histories of our respondents. It appears that in retail, and in the corporate service sector generally, changing jobs frequently – voluntarily and involuntarily – is the norm and the choice of employer quite random. Very few of our respondents had a clear career plan in mind, nor did they strategize to enhance their incomes or working conditions by seeking out particular stores or types of work or trying to acquire new skills. Instead, most viewed retail work as a stopgap to earn some money or as a way of gaining some skills which might help in developing another career (discussed below).

The fact that the retail workforce is highly mobile or 'flexible' is readily confirmed by HR managers and industry spokespersons, although they offer different reasons for the high levels of attrition. 'Nidhi', the Karnataka HR head of a large fashion retail chain, said:

> *Most important organizations are expanding, a lot of stores coming up, and a lot of new brands coming in. There are more avenues now like e-commerce, brand outlets, multi-store outlets. The growth is so much that people are required everywhere. That brings in competitiveness between companies. If you give them a salary of Rs. 500 more, they switch. That is our biggest challenge – to retain anybody.*

She added, confirming the complaints of our respondents about the nature of the work:

> *This job is very challenging. Only a person who is passionate about retail and who really wants to stand for a few hours on the floor, and interact with the customers on a daily basis, should take this job. Even though you are not happy, you have to be cheerful with the customers. That is the biggest challenge – to forget everything that is going on in the back of the mind and be on the floor and be in the work. This is challenging work, it is difficult. You have to compromise on the weekly offs, you have to compromise on your festivals, family time. Though a lot of engagement happens at the store level, but at the end of the day, you do have to compromise on your personal celebrations for sure.*

Nidhi noted that their employees stay on average stay one to 1.5 years in the FA position. When we asked about their retention strategies, she asserted that the company '*assures growth*': *'We have got a lot of people who are staying for a number of years since they have seen the growth'*, she claimed:

People who want to grow, we give them opportunities to grow. I don't think in any other sector do you have this opportunity to grow from one level to another in one year. It's the fastest growth you can get across sectors, in retail.

But immediately she added, *'People who are not having the right attitude, we let them go'.* Further, on probing she said that while 12th pass is the basic degree required to move up from Fashion Associate (FA) to a supervisory role, *'at the end of the day, a store manager cannot be a 12th pass, he has to have a degree'.*

Hema had a rather cynical view of retail workers. When we tried to probe what she understands about the aspirations of these young people, she simply answered, *'They have no aspirations',* i.e., in the sense of long-term career plans. '*They will leave for just Rs. 500* [pay hike].'. She implied that they have a very short-term perspective with regard to work: *'They just want money'* and so are always on the lookout for a job that will pay more. Although not many employees move up through the ranks to become managers – *'they don't stick around long enough'* – she did mention a few male managers in her store who started out as FCs.

Hema attributed the high attrition rates to the quality of new hires, who are not well prepared for the job. According to her, they feel scared to deal with customers, and especially to speak in English or Hindi. Although they are allowed to speak in their own languages as needed, in a large mall store such as the one she manages, they also need to be able to converse to some extent in Hindi and English. However, she admitted that her company does not make much effort to promote career progression or retention, and that they have little time or resources to provide adequate training before putting new hires on the floor. Her store gives a five-day induction training and then two weeks of on-the-job training – but even during that period there is attrition.

Because HR managers are constantly in 'hire mode' they have little time to invest in training or mentoring of staff. But they are unable to provide proper training because they have to spend all their time recruiting, Hema claimed. She said with regret that she cannot invest in her workforce at all, in terms of skill development, because all her time is spent on recruitment: *'There is no engagement with the workers'.* As soon as she gets one batch in place *'another bunch have left and I have to start again'.* Her company has an overall attrition rate of 60 percent; hence they are constantly taking in new people. Hema repeated several times, '*My only job is recruitment and payroll'*, and '*I get so tired of recruiting only, this is all I do'.*

Partly as a consequence of high employee turnover, the level of staffing in retail stores is quite startling – Hema's store (which is one of several in Bangalore) has a total staff of 800, across the two shifts, but only 250 were 'on roll' – the remainder are employed by the various brands (of which there

are 300 in the store). These large numbers suggest that retail stores are always over-staffed to compensate for the high level of employee turnover.

Although Hema asserted that workers are not interested in a long-term career, or do not know how to chart a career path, on probing she admitted that they mostly come from 'poor backgrounds' and have 'financial constraints'. Hence, they are just looking to make what money they can and have no time or capacity to plan for a better future. She gave an example of a woman employee who starts her day at 5 am working as a domestic help, then comes to the store at 9 am and works till 7.30 pm, and then studies in the evening. Hema also revealed that many employees aspire to continue their educations and quite a few are studying in B.Com and similar courses on the side. But they need to also work as their families need the income.

A retail industry spokesperson presented a rather different view of the human resources issue in this sector: *'We need people with the right attitude and only one out of ten have the right attitude.'* But he also acknowledged that retail does not provide a secure livelihood and is often seen as a last resort for employment. They (the industry association) are trying to change this notion by 'creating glamour around' the sector. With regard to career growth, he argued that one can progress only if one 'sticks around' for a few years. According to industry people, if a worker has been in retail for at least two years, she will not leave as she will be able to rise up the ranks. But few workers stay on for so long because of the strenuous nature of the job.

This interlocutor confirmed that productivity or the 'yield' in the sector is low and stores may be overstaffed, but argued that in India they cannot easily move towards a 'US-type model' of fewer staff and higher pay as it would lead to large-scale unemployment. He further asserted that employers cannot increase salaries as a retention strategy because they operate on 'wafer-thin margins', hence they cannot afford to increase the wage bill. He also argued that this would not solve the problem, as workers would still look out for higher salaries. Justifying the low salary levels in the industry, he averred:

> *We want to see a lot more people employed … either I pay Rs. 20,000 and have one person, or pay the same amount and get two people. But if the government increases the minimum wage to Rs. 20,000, then I will train him.*

What he meant is that there is no point in investing in training for low-paid high-turnover staff, which would make sense only when employees are paid more and they hire fewer people.

However, Sumitra felt that this is a *'chicken and egg problem … if you don't have enough productive people, your margins are bound to be thin forever'.* According to her, the industry needs to realize that although they can easily replace an employee who has left for a Rs. 500 pay hike with

another at the same compensation, they are losing a 'trained resource' and their productivity would again be *'back to zero for a new hire'*. So, she believes that industry should think about increasing the productivity of the existing workforce rather than always refilling positions. In her view, two steps are needed to solve this problem – increase wages and show employees a career path. By providing incentives to stay on and linking them to training programmes, they may be able to improve labour retention in the retail sector. But without training, most employees cannot move up to managerial roles:

> *Most companies these days are only living for today, they should think beyond today – if you don't think beyond today, this will become a continuous problem in the sector.*

However, the industry spokesperson was rather cynical about the quality and potential of most retail employees: *'When we hire a guy in a walk-in interview, he cannot express himself – if he is smiling, we hire him, that is enough'.* This remark implies that organizations hire virtually anyone and are not concerned about their skills or abilities. On being asked if organized retail stores prefer workers who are trained or certified, he became even more cynical, telling us that most training programmes conducted by third-party agencies are virtually useless for the retail industry – they do not impart required skills nor does a certificate result in a wage premium. This view was confirmed by Sumitra:

> *You may have a certificate from RAI* [Retail Association of India] *and I may not have, but both of us can walk in and end up getting the same job at the same price – so what's the point of going through the programme?*

She pointed out that companies invest in learning and development activities only for middle and senior management, whereas programmes for the lower end of the workforce are not as detailed or elaborate.

Thus, interviews with retail sector spokespersons and HR managers revealed how organizations think about and manage the retail labour force – they are clearly in a buyer's market, where there is a continual supply of adequate (if not 'skilled') labour, hence there is little incentive to invest in their human resources, cultivate them as long-term employees, or improve salaries or working conditions. Companies are able to take advantage of the over-supply of labour. In response, it is not surprising that employees change jobs frequently – they have no incentive to develop a sense of commitment or identity with their organizations, with the industry, or even with other service workers.

7.2.5 Single women as main earners: Case studies

Many of the retail workers we interviewed were single women who had come to Bangalore in search of jobs. While a few had college degrees, most had started working after completing 10th or 12th class. They had to discontinue studies due to financial problems in the family and started working to support their parents and younger siblings. Interestingly, we found this trend among women from rural as well as urban areas, as several migrant women were remitting money to their villages.

A few of the unmarried women in the cohort were the sole or primary earners in their families. Several brought up this fact themselves during the conversation, while others were more guarded and only hinted at this information in passing. The families of the migrants were engaged in agriculture and owned some land, but since agriculture does not provide sufficient income, these young educated women took it upon themselves to supplement and diversify the household income. They had come to Bangalore along with friends or relatives to look for work, and since they could not find other opportunities, they took jobs in the mall. Despite having to pay for rent, food and transport, they were able to save up some money from their salaries to send home. Several of the Bangalore-based workers were also contributing substantially to their households. To illustrate these dynamics, in this section we present the stories of several female retail workers who have become the sole or main support for their families.

'Srilekha'

Srilekha is a 22-year-old woman from a village in Mangalore district. She had come to the city about a year before we met her with the objective of finding a job, after failing to pass her final year BA exams. With the help of her brother's contacts, was able to land a job in a private company. Her brother even helped her forge her Bachelor's degree certificate, as this was a requirement for the post. However, she quit the job after six months as she could not adjust to the 'environment' and found it difficult to get along with her colleagues: *'Their food habits and ways were very different and I couldn't bring myself to fit in',* she said, probably referring to the fact that they were from the Northeast. As she still needed to send money to her parents in the village, she took up another job with a lingerie brand in a large format retail store in the mall, where we met her. However, she chose not to reveal anything her change of jobs to her family as she felt that they would not approve of their daughter working in a lingerie outlet.

Her mother is an *anganwadi* worker and her father is a lawyer who no longer practices. She has a younger brother who is pursuing an engineering course in Hubli. As her mother receives only a small honorarium, Srilekha is the main earner in the family. The household also gets some money from their agricultural land, on which they cultivate areca nut and coconut. In Bangalore, she has

rented a small, one-bedroom house along with two other girls. The rent of Rs.3000 is divided equally among the three.

'Rachel'

Rachel is 19 and works for a major cosmetic brand. She was born and raised in a Kannadiga Christian household in Bangalore and has lived in a low-income neighbourhood in the city for most of her life. Her father is a painter who works on contract and her mother is a helper at a garment factory. She is a third generation Banagalorean – she said that her parents and grandparents have spent most of their lives in the city. She has two sisters – her older sister got married recently and her younger sister is still in school. Rachel completed her PUC in Arts, after which she had to discontinue her studies due to financial difficulties at home. Rachel previously worked at a small cosmetic brand outlet, but quit after a year as the pay was low. She learned about an opening with another brand in the mall through her sister's friend, got the position, and had been working there for three months when we met her.

As Rachel is a 'reliever' or replacement worker, she is expected to be willing to work on either the first or second shift. The first shift is from 11 am to 8 pm and the second shift is from 12 pm to 9 pm. She stays 10-15 kms from her workplace, and since not many buses ply to her area she gets home by 10.30 pm when she works the second shift, and after 9 pm when she leaves at 8 pm. She works at this mall for two days a week, at another mall for two days, one day at a Big Bazaar store and one day at another Big Bazaar. When asked when she expects to be taken on as a full-time regular employee, she said that her manager has told her it might take six months to a year and depends on her performance. She noted that the incentives are better for permanent employees and hopes that her job will be regularized soon.

Rachel had worked at a small single brand cosmetics outlet for a year prior to joining her current job. She quit the first job as the pay was very low. She said that they have to set aside a certain amount every month to pay off the loan. In addition, they have the regular expenses of rent (Rs. 4000), bus pass (Rs. 1050), tuition for her younger sister, and other household expenses, so it is important for her to earn the incentive every month – which amounts to Rs. 2800-3000 if she achieves 100% of the target, or Rs. 2100 for 70% of the target.

Rachel described her experience of working for this cosmetics brand as *'paravagilla'*, or okay, so-so. When asked why, she said noted that the job is not permanent so she is not very satisfied with the position. Also, she reaches home late when she is on the second shift, which she is not happy about. Her parents are supportive of her work. She had aspired to become a police officer but had to give up this ambition after the family ran into debt due to her sister's wedding, which she is helping to pay off.

'Shreya'

Shreya is a 22-year-old well turned-out, self-assured young woman. She works at a cosmetic brand store in a mall, which sells luxury brands such as Dior, Makeup Forever, and Bobby Brown, along with the brand she works for. In the store, Shreya manages the counter of Nat, an Australian brand. She has a total work experience of more than eight years in the cosmetics retail sector. She said that she had to start working early to support her family after her father passed away. She had completed class 10 and was only 15 years old at the time. Shreya wants to be able to support her brother at least until he completes his Bachelor's degree. When asked if she would like to study further sometime in the future, she noted that given the financial constraints, she cannot afford to harbour such ambitions.

Shreya started her career with an international cosmetics brand where she worked for five years, and after gaining some skills she switched to another well-known international brand. As she was finding it difficult to keep up with the work pressure in that job, she quit after three years and then took up another job where she worked for five months. This is her fourth job in cosmetics retail. Speaking about her work trajectory, Shreya narrated that she was a timid teenager who did not know much about brands, products and trends in cosmetics when she started out, but her years in the sector and periodic trainings helped her to gain these skills and enabled her to face customers confidently.

Shreya stays in Viveknagar, a low-income neighbourhood near Koramangala, with her mother and brother. She is the sole earner in the family and has to provide for all the family's expenses. She explained that her mother has a cardiac condition and cannot work, and her brother is currently pursuing his second year of PUC. She earns Rs. 20,000 per month plus incentives, and from this salary she pays for her mother's treatment, rent, her brother's college fees, food and other expenses. Hence, she is hardly able to save anything: *'I have not even saved money for my wedding'*.

'Soumya'

Soumya comes from an agricultural family – her father is a farmer in her hometown in Mandya district, but lately he has not been cultivating. However, her brother – who stays separately with his wife and children – continues to cultivate the family land. From her description, we were able to deduce that the brother had an altercation with the father, but it was not clear what terms they were on. Much later into the conversation, Soumya mentioned that she has to look after her parents, hinting that in the current situation she is the only earning member. It was unclear if the land had been divided or not.

After completing PUC, Soumya started her career as a tele-marketing agent with a real estate company in Bangalore. She had aspirations of becoming a team leader but was told that the position

requires advanced computer skills, which she did not have. As she was not satisfied with the way the company treated her, she quit the job after two years. Subsequently, she worked as a counter sales executive at the Yeshwanthpur branch of More Supermarket for two years. While she was working at the supermarket, she learned about openings in her current workplace.

Soumya wanted to study fashion designing after class 12 but could not afford the course, but she still nurtured the dream by learning to sew. With a glint of excitement in her eye, she told us that she can stitch a whole *salwar kameez* ensemble and that her friends often seek sartorial advice from her, especially to get clothes ready for important occasions. She pointed out that in her present circumstances, she has to keep her job at the mall to be able to provide for her family, but she still harbours aspirations of designing clothes for her living.

Discussion

The reliance of parents on their unmarried daughters for financial support – including by sending them to work in Bangalore – appears to be an increasingly common trend. These stories point to a larger shift in the gendering of work and family responsibility in India which has been noted by other scholars (Gidwani and Ramamurthy 2018). What appears to be a positive development in terms of increasing education levels for girls and their entry into the urban workforce, may also reflect a changing gender equation within the household which is not necessarily positive for them. It appears that young unmarried women increasingly bear the burden of their brothers' ambitions (to study further, to sit for competitive exams) or marginalization in the job market. Whereas a few years ago one would rarely find educated single women living without their families in the city and sending money home, now it is much more common. Although scholarly attention has been paid to the entry of middle-class women into new occupations such as in the IT and ITES industries, and female participation at the lower end of the labour force (such as in the construction and garment industries), we now find educated girls from small landowning and lower middle class families entering the workforce and delaying marriage to help support their natal families. Through education, urban migration and employment, young women from small landowning households may experience a partial escape from the patriarchal household which earlier generations could not, only to face oppressive labour conditions in big retail, working to support their siblings' education or until their marriages are arranged. These are issues and trends that require further research.

7.2.6 Conclusion: The corporate retail workforce

To summarize, our study of the retail economy in Bangalore shows that insecurity of employment, together with the absence of a clear career path, frames workers' experiences of work in this sector,

articulated as 'there is no future here'. Most respondents believe that their career prospects in the industry depends on attributes such as competence and diligence along with certain educational qualification and work experience, which they felt they lacked, and so are not in a position to negotiate for better roles or working conditions.

The irrelevance of education and training in this sector is striking – employees with college degrees are not better placed to make a career in retail than those with 10th or 12th standard educations, nor does skill training carry a wage premium – so it is difficult for workers to know how to chart a career path. While our women respondents claimed that there is no gender discrimination in career advancement, they also noted that there are few women team leaders or supervisors in the industry. Moreover, many workers had no desire to grow in these jobs. Low compensation, job insecurity, long working hours, difficulty in achieving targets, work pressure combined with monotony, constant managerial surveillance enforced by the threat of dismissal, and strenuous but boring work, were the main areas of discontent. Several workers were vociferous about feeling 'stuck' in the job due to the financial situation of their families. Interestingly, although workers reported being reprimanded for not achieving targets, they tended to view incentives or variable pay structure positively, as a way to increase their incomes.

In light of the impermanent and dead-end nature of work in the sector, many employees had other plans – sometimes elaborate ones – to plot their uncertain futures. Most retail workers are looking for something more permanent and with higher salaries, and they imagine other options, even if few take concrete steps to achieve those goals. While several aspired to start their own businesses enterprises, others wanted to land 'office jobs'. These workers were appreciative of the experience gained and the skill sets they were able to build in their current jobs, which they believed would help them move into other careers. However, given the nature of the work, experience gained in retail is unlikely to augment most employees' skills or knowledge substantially and so fulfil these aspirations or lead to any meaningful social mobility. A larger and longer-term study would be needed to gauge the economic and social consequences of retail service work, especially for rural migrants.

7.3 Drivers: Aspirations, expectations and reality

This section analyses the outcome of the driving training undertaken by rural youth, who aspire to get secure employment in the expanding transport sector, and also draws on a contrasting case study of several platform (Ola and Uber) drivers in Bangalore. An attempt has been made to study the

differences as well as similarities between these two groups, especially with regard to the precariousness and vulnerabilities of employment in this sector.

The purpose of drawing a comparison between the driving training cohort at Move-up and Ola /Uber drivers is to highlight the different levels of precarity present in this sector due to the informal working conditions. The training cohort at Move-up represents inexperienced rural youth aspiring to become city-based drivers, whereas the Ola / Uber drivers are more urban based stable workforce in this sector (of rural or semi-urban origin, but most have lived and worked in Bangalore for several years). Move-up offers driver training with the vision of absorbing rural youth in the expanding urban transportation sector. Most of the trainees enrolled in the programme expressed a desire to apply for a commercial /yellow board driving license, which they believed would prove useful in expanding their opportunities in this sector. But Move-up placed them mainly in 'on-demand' driving jobs, which were not well received by the trainees, who often rejected such jobs because of the lack of security as well as low remuneration. Several trainees aspired to work for platforms companies such as Ola and Uber, as also with private car rental agencies, which are seen as providing better job stability and a constant flow of income. They believed that the experience gained as a commercial driver would eventually help them to set up their own transportation business a few years later.

In this context, this section highlights the limitations of skills centres in supporting rural youth in their aspirations. The study also reveals differences and similarities in conditions of employment in different segments of the transport sector and raises the question whether the platform economy really promises a better future for rural youth. Even though working as Ola/ Uber drivers remains a lucrative option for them, employment even in these large so-called 'formal sector' corporates remains relatively unregulated, resulting in a lack of job satisfaction, precariousness and harsh working conditions. Studies from western countries – where Uber and other platform companies dominate the 'gig' economy – have shown that, far from creating autonomous 'entrepreneurial workers' who can reap the full benefits of their own labour, this new category of 'self-employed' workers appears to be more exploited than traditional employees (Moazami 2017).

7.3.1 Case study of Move-up driver trainees

As discussed in section 4, Move-up's main objective is poverty alleviation, and driving is one of the sectors they selected to provide skill training to rural youth because they believe it provides good opportunities for advancement. Move-up also runs a helpline to assist alumni as they struggle in their first jobs, look for other jobs, or face issues relating to housing, healthcare or finance. However, none of the Move-up cohort that we followed had taken up the jobs offered by Move-up, and most had

ended up returning to their native villages and towns. In the following sections we present the in-depth findings on this cohort of trainees, to assess the gap between their expectations and the realities they face in terms of employment.

Socio economic profile

The driving cohort comprises of ten male trainees, of which nine were migrants from other cities, districts and towns in Karnataka; one respondent had migrated from Bihar to Bangalore. Half of the cohort were from rural areas of North Karnataka. The income and occupational details of the parents convey the impression that although the families are engaged in low paying occupations, they are well above the rural poverty line (see Appendix: Note on Rural and Urban Poverty Line). These families are able to send at least one son for vocational education/skill training in the hope of better earnings in the future, indicating that his labour is not necessary for the family's survival at least in the short run. Most of the trainees were from the Scheduled Castes, and the majority had studied till class 10. Most of the respondents had been engaged earlier in other occupations in both the informal and formal sectors, such as in construction, laying electrical wires, managing stocks at Big Basket, supervisor at a granite store, and data entry operator, and one even owned a business (a welding place) of his own. Driving trainees were found to be from a lower economic stratum, and with lower educational qualifications, compared to trainees in sales and office management courses. The latter categories also have a higher retention rate in their jobs, compared to the drivers. In the following sections we explore why so few of the driving trainees were able to continue in this sector in Bangalore after training.

Table 7.11: Household per capita income of driver trainees

Household per capita income	No. of respondents
Rs. 1000 - Rs. 1500	0
Rs. 1600 - Rs. 2500	3
Rs. 2600 - Rs. 3500	3
Rs. 3600 - Rs. 4500	2
Rs. 4600 - Rs. 6500	2
Total	**10**

Table 7.12: Previous work experience of driver trainees

Previous work experience	No of respondents
Construction worker	4
Data entry operator	1
Electrical work	2
Stock in-charge at Big Basket/ supervisor in a granite shop	2
Business owner	1
Total	**10**

Becoming a driver: training and job placement

This section describes the training methods, placement processes, and students' experiences of the training undertaken at Move-up.

As the majority of the students in the driving cohort came from rural areas, field mobilization was an important means of recruitment for this group. Field teams' visits to villages in Raichur and other 'backward' districts of northern Karnataka in particular were instrumental in convincing the prospective trainees and their parents regarding the transformative impact of driver training (see section 4).

A major car manufacturer has collaborated with Move-up for driver training by providing ten vehicles. The training course for driving is (like the other courses) for 100 days. In addition to driving, students take classes in English, livelihood, digital literacy and numeracy, life skills, and so on. Move-up is supposed to help them secure a license after training.

After completion of training, Move-up places students in various organizations in Bangalore. The placement leader at Move-up stated that their graduates can be placed only in 'on-demand' driving services, which provide drivers temporarily and on a short-term basis to clients who need this service, mostly for a day or less. This is because they are only eligible to get a commercial ('yellow plate') license one year after obtaining the regular driver's license. Driving students are also placed as private drivers (with families). However, these placements do not provide any job security, as they lack any kind of contract or agreement with the employer. Most of the trainees we interviewed found employment by themselves rather than through Move-up. The positions provided by Move-up were seen as comparatively low paying, such that the students were not able to sustain themselves in Bangalore. As discussed in section 4, after completion of training they are not provided with even interim

accommodation by Move-up, and without adequate employment they end up returning to their hometowns. They also face trouble staying in the job due to work alienation, financial strain or unpleasant employment conditions. The vice-principal of Move-up noted a significant drop in the number of driving trainees over a period of one year. While the earlier batch had 75 students, the new batch had only 40 students.

The students enrolled in Move-up's driving course generally reported positive experiences. They say that the rigorous schedule helped them to build habits of discipline and respectful communication, although in the first week they found the rules to be a bit stringent. The students also seem to have realized the value of learning digital literacy, as it has enabled them to access online portals for purposes such as shopping and using digital cash or electronic mail. They also found the English classes to be an added advantage, as they believe it will help them in the job market and to progress in their occupations. One respondent recounted:

> *Once I started attending Life Skills classes, my confidence increased. If I can speak fluently in English then I think I can be a supervisor someday. Talking in English is difficult but at least I can understand it now.*

Other students narrated their experiences in this way:

> *I thought that everyday there will be just driving and I did not think I will learn so much. But after coming here, I believe we can achieve anything with willpower.*

> *When I don't understand anything about driving, I feel like quitting. But when I sit in life skills class, I forget all that.*

These remarks indicate that life skills training had some impact on the students by instilling confidence in them and helping them to develop a positive outlook on life. They also got an opportunity for peer learning and developing friendships, as two respondents stated:

My best friend 'Sahil' is from Kodagu. We both normally answer more in English class, so we started discussing our doubts and we got along.

The life is good. I don't feel like leaving this place. I have made so many friends, I feel bad to leave them and go. 'Amar' sir encourages us a lot. When my family members hear my soft way of talking, they believe I have changed a lot.

The training programme thus provided students with an opportunity to practice self-reflection and 'work on their selves' (see section 4).

Aspirations and motivations

Several respondents said that they were interested in learning English along with driving. Most were also looking forward to numeracy and digital literacy training as they believed these skills would add to their knowledge and also help them to progress in the job market. A few of the respondents recounted:

First when they only told about driving, I didn't want to go. But then they said they will make us read, write and speak English. So, I joined. Then they told us they will make us independent. I want an education and a good job.

I don't know how to speak in English. I also don't have any contacts with people who can get me a job. So, I wanted to join and learn English and get a job. They also promised us a job.

Several respondents in the driving cohort had worked in other occupations such as construction, and they felt that working as a driver would provide them respite from such physically strenuous jobs. They also believed it would help them increase their income and guarantee more regular work, thereby providing greater job security as compared to their previous occupations. They hoped that they would experience better working conditions as well:

I worked as 'gaare kelsa' [concrete finisher in the construction industry] *for two years. I used to get paid Rs. 500 per day, but the work was irregular. In a week, we used to work*

only for three days and we would not get proper money. My parents could not see me do 'hard work' so I left the job.

I joined this company called Nowtell Electricals Pvt Ltd that provides CCTV products. I used to do the wiring and fitting of cameras and got paid Rs. 9000. They did not provide accommodation or food. The owner used to scold me a lot. I had to do night shift work, but I would not get anything extra for that. So, I quit the job. The Move-up people visited my village and told me that they will teach life skills, driving, English, numeracy. They said that they will find us a job after training, but we should work on that job. They said we will get a salary of Rs. 15,000 and it would go up in future.

Other respondents stated:

I worked as a private driver in Haveri for one year. I used to get Rs. 17,000 as I would do long distance driving also. But I always felt it was their car and I need my own. So, I wanted to buy a car of my own and attach it to taxi companies and make more money. I have come here to realize that dream.

My friends suggested that I join this training. They told me it is better to get one permanent job and training helps in getting one job 'properly'. Move-up team also said that they will guarantee a job at the end of the training.

For the last 15 years I have kept on moving. I felt that if I learn driving there will be some stability in life and I can stick with one job. I can also start a small business on my own with driving. [He plans to start a small cab agency. At BigBasket there was no provision of PF, ESI or accommodation. At the training centre, I was told the first few days will be difficult but afterwards things will be good. With the training, students will get rid of all bad habits. I was told they provide job also along with training.

These responses show that students seek stability in employment, which their previous jobs did not provide. Hence lack of job satisfaction in their previous occupations was a major reason that these respondents joined driver training, as it offers them a possibility to learn a professional skill. Most of the respondents were told about the job guarantee, which further motivated them to enrol for the course. Moreover, they saw the potential in undertaking driving training as it would enable them to

perhaps start their own businesses eventually. Seven out of the ten respondents said that they wished to start their own businesses, preferably at their native places. The remark of one student below further suggests that the promised income from driving was a major motivation for joining the driving course:

> *They told us they will teach English and driving. They said the starting salary is Rs. 15, 000 and it goes on increasing to Rs. 25,000 and more depending on our work.*

The director of community engagement at Move-up asserted, *'Driving is a game changer for youth'*.

Placements: Expectations and reality

After the training period, we made follow-up calls to the respondents to assess their pathways of employment. The findings for the driving cohort present quite a grim picture, as compared to their expectations from this course. Only 30 percent of the driver trainees ended up in jobs related to the training, that is, as drivers, and they secured these jobs by their own efforts and contacts, not through Move Up (Table 7.13). The three respondents working in professions other than driving in Bangalore also secured the jobs through their personal contacts. Thus, only four respondents of this cohort were employed in Bangalore after training, whereas seven expected to be employed in Bangalore (Table 7.14). With regard to the salary, two respondents, both working as drivers, were earning approximately Rs. 30,000 per month (Table 7.15). This suggests that driving can indeed provide a decent and stable income, but it depends on the type of employment.

Table 7.13: Expected employment and actual post-training employment of driving trainees

Expected employment		**Post training employment occupation**	
Driving job offered by centre	8	Driving job	3
Office job/any other job	2	Working in factory	1
		Other (big retail store, small finance bank)	2
		Unemployed	3
		Information unavailable	1
Total	**10**	**Total**	**10**

Table 7.14: Location of employment of driving trainee respondents

Location	Expected	Post Training
Bengaluru	7	4
Home town or district	2	2
Other	1	0
Unemployed	0	3
Information unavailable	0	1
Total	**10**	**10**

Table 7.15: Salary details of driving trainee respondents

Salary	Expected	Post training
Rs. 5000 - Rs. 10,000	3	1
Rs. 11,000 - Rs. 15,000	5	1
Rs. 16,000 - Rs. 20,000	1	1
Rs. 21,000- Rs. 30,000	0	2
No particular expectation	1	0
Unemployed	0	3
Information unavailable	0	2
Total	**10**	**10**

To better understand the nature of on-demand driving jobs in the city, we interacted with two such companies in Bangalore. A strategy and operations executive at one organization stated that they do not employ drivers directly but instead recruit them on a contractual basis. He stated that an on-demand driver can earn close to Rs. 14, 000-15, 000 if he works for 6-7 hours per day. Depending on the number of hours worked, this can increase from Rs. 20,000 to 40,000 per month, and some drivers earn Rs. 40,000 by working for 12-13 hours. These figures indicate the unregulated nature of the work of on demand drivers.

These organizations prefer to hire only drivers with experience of at least three years, as they believe that less experienced drivers would face difficulty handling the traffic in Bangalore. This is where Move Up trainees are at a disadvantage, as they barely have any driving experience. It also explains the failure of Move Up to be able to provide moderately paid employment to their trainees as on demand drivers. The operations executive at an organization employing on demand driver stated:

As of now I don't think we have recruited more than two drivers from Move-up unless the recommendations are good. The recommendation will be considered if it states that they are already drivers and have now received training in digital literacy along with three months of training in driving.

The manager of the second on-demand organization stated that 60 to 70 percent of the drivers are from rural areas like Hassan, Tumkur, Shimoga and Chikmagalur. They have a mobilization team that helps in the recruitment process by spreading awareness in rural regions of Karnataka. Starting salary is Rs. 13,500 per month with accommodation, PF and ESI. The organization offers incremental slabs after completion of three years, five years and seven years. They prefer recruiting drivers who have at least one year of experience as a yellow badge driver. When asked whether they prefer to recruit driving trainees from skill training institutions such as Move-up, the manager stated:

The problem is that they do not have experience. And we have a lot of bigger vehicles like buses, tempo travellers etc, and for such vehicles a different license is required. Initially, I convinced my management that we have smaller vehicles like Tata Sumo so we hired one room for drivers to stay in and gave some facilities like a mat, food, stove. We had appointed 8-10 people as drivers from Move-up, but they were not able to cope with the job and left. They are mostly young, and due to lack of experience they also ended up meeting with road accidents several times.

Figure 7.1: Job advertisement for drivers

Move-up driver trainees faced difficulty in securing jobs as on-demand drivers due to lack of experience. This explains why most had moved back to their native places and were engaged in private driving jobs there, as their expenses are lower at home and they could probably save more money as

compared to working in the city. These trainees also hoped to join platforms such as Ola and Uber once they have at least a year experience and are eligible for a commercial license. Despite the number of working hours ranging from 10-12 hours for both on-demand and Ola/ Uber drivers, the latter (Ola/ Uber) offer an opportunity to earn higher incomes.

Thus, a huge gap is seen between the initial expectations and the reality of the job market faced by driving trainees. For this batch, the major issue was that they did not receive their driving licenses for at least 20 to 30 days after training, and because they could not sustain themselves in the city without employment, they had to return to their villages to find jobs there (driving or in other sectors). In addition, several of our respondents refused to take up the opportunities offered by Move-up as on-demand drivers because of the uncertain and precarious working conditions, irregular working hours, and salaries that were below their expectations (usually around Rs. 8-9000 p.m.).

How do the driving students manage their first two months after training, since they have to wait until they receive their driving licenses to be able to work? In most cases, interviews or jobs took place soon after the course was completed, while it took one to two months to obtain their driving license. During this gap, most ended up securing other employment for themselves. Therefore, for these rural youth, driver training did not provide the expected rewards in terms of better job security, income or employment conditions. Moreover, the unregulated nature of employment in the transport sector is highlighted by the fact that most companies term drivers 'partners' rather than employees. In platform and on-demand companies, their role is only to connect drivers to customers. The drivers can work as much (or as little) as they want, and they get paid accordingly. In some cases, after a driver has worked for some time the company will start paying him a fixed monthly salary.

Post-training employment status of driving trainees – case studies

Rishab had received an offer to work as an on-demand driver at a salary of Rs. 8500 with no incentive. He said that he was not willing to take up this job as he would be driving a different car every day and the controls would be different. He wanted a minimum Rs. 10,000 to work anywhere in Bangalore. Rishab had planned on taking up any job provided by Move-up and then to take out a loan to buy a new car, but now he feels stuck. When we spoke with him last, he had applied for a yellow board license to expand his options. But Rishab was unemployed, staying in his hometown of Haveri. As he narrated his story:

> *I feel cheated and hurt by Move-up. The low salary is the reason why no student wants to take up the job offered by them. What have we gained from them? Those certificates and that medal is of no use. Is this on-demand driving even a job? I expected them to*

provide a stable, respectable job. How will an organization grow if this is the state of students it produces?

Similarly, 'Rajdeep returned to Raichur after completing his training. He received a call from Move-up with an offer to work with *Times of India*, not as a driver but an outdoor job conducting opinion polls. The salary offered was Rs. 10,000, but he did not take up the job. He instead worked for two months as a field electrician with Airtel in Bangalore, for Rs.15,000 per month, as Move-up did not provide him with any interview or placement. He then returned to Raichur to look for a job. He recounted:

I received my driving license from Move-up, and they did enquire if I wanted a job. In response I said that if it can offer Rs. 14,000 and above, only then would I be willing to take it up. The team from Move-up said that they can only offer a job for Rs. 9000 per month. I then told that I will find a job myself.

During follow-up interviews, we found Devank working for a large on-line retail company as team leader. He was staying with his sister and her husband in Bangalore. He had been working for this company for the past six months for a salary of Rs. 15,000 per month plus benefits. He said that he was happy with the job because it is less stressful compared to driving. Following the driver training he had worked for two weeks at a service station, but was not paid as he did not have the driver's license at that time. He was planning to continue working at the retail company although it was a night shift job. Describing his work profile, he said that his job was to make a clear route map for his team to send them out to deliver the products. He considered this job very comfortable and planned to stay on.

Utsav hails from Raichur. Since he found living in Bangalore expensive, he returned to his village after the training was over. He said that he wants to settle in his village in the long term. During a follow-up call, we found Utsav working as a lorry driver for a logistics company for a salary of Rs. 30,000 per month. He got this job through a friend in his village. He is still waiting for a call from Move-up to offer him a job.

On our last contact with him, Murad was working as a welder in a factory in Peenya (Bangalore). He was doing the same job before joining the training course in driving and continues the same afterwards. His salary is Rs. 15,000 p.m., and he generally works all seven days of the week. When the factory is shut down due to lack of work, Rs. 500 per day is deducted from his salary. This may happen four to five days in a month or sometimes only one or two days. He said that he did not receive any

appointment letter or contract. Murad was offered a job as an on-demand private driver by Move-up. However, he refused to take up the offer due to the uncertainty of employment and low salary (Rs. 8,000). Regarding Move-up, he said:

> *The teaching and learning were good, but was not at all useful because they don't provide us with a job. The three months spent at Move-up was a complete waste of time and I incurred a loss of Rs. 45,000, which I would have earned if I continued working in the factory. Life skills would be useful only for situations that would arise if we were employed in the profession, they provided training for.*

Thus, although the objective of providing driver training to the rural youth was to absorb them into decent urban employment, none of the ten follow-up respondents from the Move-up driver cohort were working in the jobs provided by the NGO. Also, they received their licenses only two months after completing the course, by which time most had returned to their hometowns and found other jobs because they could not afford to stay in the city. The three who were working as drivers were not employed as on-demand private drivers, jobs that had been offered by Move-up. Two had returned to their previous jobs. Thus, the promise of higher pay, job placement and employment stability that led these youth to join the driver training course did not translate into reality.

7.3.2 Case study of platform drivers

India has seen a large spurt in the workforce employed in platform-based taxi services, as drivers utilized the opportunity to earn higher incomes by availing of the incentive structure offered by Ola and Uber. These two companies together accounted for 95 percent of the market for platform taxis between late 2017 and early 2018. Based on our study of a small, purposively selected cohort of platform drivers, in this section we present our findings on the employment conditions and opportunities for advancement offered to drivers by aggregators. We also analyze the contribution of cab aggregators in reducing the disadvantages of employment in taxi services, which is broadly in the informal sector.

Socio economic profile

We conducted interviews with eight drivers working with aggregators as Ola and Uber – four Ola drivers, three Uber drivers and one who works both with Ola and Uber Seven respondents had migrated from other districts and towns in Karnataka, whereas one originated from Bangalore Rural. Most respondents (6) came from rural areas of south Karnataka.

The income and occupational details of respondents' parents (Tables 7.16 and 7.17) show that although they are engaged in low paying occupation, the household per capita income of a majority of the respondents is significantly above the rural poverty line (see Appendix: Note on Rural and Urban Poverty Line). These data suggest that although the respondents are far below middle class, they are not in the lowest income classes characterized by poverty. They also suggest that they can afford a better standard of living compared to the Move-up driving trainees (who are also mainly of rural origin). With regard to caste/community profile of this cohort, respondents were mostly Hindus (5). Amongst the Hindus, one was in the ST category and the remaining four belonged to other castes (Table 7.20).

In terms of educational background, five respondents out of eight had completed grade 10, out of which one had completed PUC, and one is pursuing graduation (Table 7.18). As Table 7.19 indicates, six respondents had been working as drivers previously and had switched to aggregators to increase their incomes.

Table 7.16: Household per capita income of platform drivers

Household per capita income	**No of respondents**
Rs. 4000 - Rs. 6000	2
Rs. 6500 - Rs. 10,000	2
Rs. 10,000 and above	2
Information unavailable	2
Total	**8**

Table 7.17: Occupational details of parents of platform drivers

Father's occupation		**Mother's occupation**	
Agricultural labour/ farmer	5	Agricultural labour/farmer	1
Other (cloth mill)	1	Homemaker	2
Information unavailable	2	Information unavailable	5
Total	**10**	**Total**	**10**

Table 7.18: Educational qualification and community / caste of platform drivers

Educational Qualification	Respondents	Community	Caste	Respondents
Below 10th	3	Hindu	ST (1)	5
10th pass	3		Others (4)	
PUC	1			
Pursuing graduation	1	Muslim		1
		Information unavailable		2
Total	**8**	**Total**		**8**

Table 7.19: Previous work experience of platform drivers

Occupation	No of respondents
Driver	6
Electrician/ security supervisor	2
Total	**8**

Table 7.20: Salary details of platform drivers

Salary	No. of respondents
Rs. 30,000- Rs. 40,000	4
Rs. 41,000 - Rs. 50,000	3
Information unavailable	1
Total	**8**

The following sections discuss the employment conditions, aspirations and grievances of these platform drivers.

Income and working conditions

Most of the respondents said that they started working with the aggregators as Ola and Uber as the initial incentive structure enabled them to earn substantial incomes. Several drivers were already well

versed with driving; they had joined Ola or Uber in order to increase their earnings. Most of the respondents had been engaged in the driving profession for at least two years and seem to have gotten connected with Ola and Uber through personal contacts.

Net income reported by the respondents ranged from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 50,000 per month. The income varies based on the number of rides as well as rewards reaped through the incentive structure provided by their aggregators. Among the eight respondents, four were earning Rs. 30,000 to 40,000 while three earned Rs. 41,000 to 50,000 (Table 7.22). Thus, most of the drivers are able to earn at least Rs. 30,000 per month after paying for fuel and maintenance of the car – expenses that are borne by the driver and not the aggregator companies. But to net this income they need to work for at least 12 hours per day. Nonetheless they choose to work for aggregators rather than as private drivers as they can earn and save more. In addition, as private agencies do not pay for the entire month, professional drivers prefer working with Ola and Uber in order to maintain a continuous flow of income, despite the high aggregator share. As one respondent stated:

> *When I first came to the city, I worked as a private driver for a month and was getting a salary of Rs. 15,000 per month. Of this, I was able to save only Rs. 5000 after spending for food, accommodation, etc.*

The initial incentive structure that led them to join aggregators enabled them to save more than Rs. 1500 per day. Under the current payment structure, they can net only Rs. 1000-1500 per day, despite starting their day at 6 am and working until 10-11 pm in the night, or more than 10 hours of work per day. One respondent stated that he works at least 12 hours a day, so he is able to earn at least Rs. 1500 per day after accounting for aggregator's share and maintenance and fuel costs. Speaking about the old incentive structure, a respondent said:

> *Most drivers would earn an incentive of Rs. 3000 per day back then. In those days, they had to log in for 12 hours and would get Rs. 3000, for 15 trips. Incentives were reduced over time.*

This remark indicates that under the new incentive structure, earnings have reduced by almost 50 percent compared to the previous one, which had motivated many to seek employment with the aggregators. Aggregators lowered incentives for drivers after creating a large base of service providers. The reduced incentive indicates that protecting business is far more important to these platform companies than protecting drivers' ability to earn and work. Low fares keep an ever-widening market

of riders attached to the platform (Surie 2018). Drivers' incomes have been further reduced due to rising fuel costs.

Figure 7.2: Platform drivers

Delving further into the incentive structure, the respondents explained that they are required to take at least eight rides per day. For the first ride in excess of this number, they get Rs. 900 as incentive. For the second, the rate is Rs. 1500 and for the third and fourth, it is Rs. 2200 and 2800, respectively, and so on. The incentive structure is thus designed in a manner that it is in the interest of the driver to take more rides. The drivers also mentioned that there is another plan wherein the aggregator calculates the incentive based on the distance travelled. Under this plan, for every kilometre travelled, the driver gets Rs. 14 and Ola's share is Rs. 22. Thus the drivers inevitably end up paying more when they travel to and from areas where traffic congestion is common due to surge pricing. Ola also deducts Rs. 60 per day from their earnings for internet charges. In addition, the aggregator's share has increased over time – the share that Ola takes from the trip price now stands at 22% and for Uber it is 25%. With the addition of 6% tax, the aggregator share for Uber goes up to 31%, which drivers find way too high. If the customer pays through Ola Money the company receives a higher share of 24%. Moreover, drivers do not get to choose their rides, which makes it even more difficult for them to achieve the target prescribed for incentives. As these respondents explained:

> *They have a target of taking at least eight trips per day for earning an incentive. Ola takes a share from both incentives and earnings. Also, when a customer cancels a ride, of the cancellation charges of say Rs. 60, the driver gets only Rs. 20 or 30. Then, they also levy*

surcharges on the driver. So, after deducting the aggregator's share and other expenses, a driver is left only with 65% to 70% of the earnings that he made in a month.

If one completes 18 rides in 24 hours, he's entitled to an incentive of Rs. 5000. After the aggregator's deduction (commission), this comes up to Rs. 4000. It is difficult for a driver to achieve this as one may be required to take long trips of 20 to 30 kms, which take 1.5 to 2 hours.

Added to these costs and deductions are the expenses associated with vehicle loans (drivers must own their own cars, in most cases). Most drivers prefer to purchase their cars by taking loans from banks rather than from the aggregator, as the interest rate is higher in the latter case. For instance, if a driver buys his car through a loan from Ola, the latter deducts Rs. 1100-1200 per day regardless of whether a driver is driving or not, on top of a down payment of Rs. 70,000. If the driver does not drive for one or two weeks in a row, the aggregator seizes the vehicle. In addition, if they are in debt to the company, they are allowed to take off only for two days a month and are required to cover 220 kms per day during this period. Under this arrangement, the car is in the aggregator's name for four years, after which the ownership is transferred to the driver, provided he complies with the rules regarding working hours, earnings, number of leave days, etc. By the time the loan period is over, a driver would have paid the aggregator Rs. 15-17 lakhs, which is much more than what would be owed to a bank. The repayment conditions are also more relaxed in the case of banks and private finance companies as compared to the aggregators. Also, by the time the vehicle is transferred to the driver's name, it is old and will not fetch a good resale price. Drivers, however, continue to take loans from aggregators as banks have stricter requirements for giving loans.

In order to earn extra income, some drivers have tied up with other private driving agencies who intimate them about outstation rides. They take up these assignments based on their convenience and perhaps earn more from such travels on some days, for instance taking tourists outside Bangalore for the weekend. During such trips they switch off their Ola or Uber app. Association with private agencies also works in favour of drivers as they are at liberty to choose the rides according to their convenience.

Overall, there is a lack of satisfaction amongst drivers working with Ola or Uber. One respondent narrated that he takes up rides under Ola or Uber only twice or thrice a month, as he feels the aggregator share is way too high. He told us that he has a lot of networks from his earlier job as a security supervisor at Oracle, through which he gets car rental and driving assignments; hence he does not feel the need to align with these aggregators.

Our research indicates that drivers must work for around 12 hours a day in order to extract a small amount of gain from the stringent incentive structure. This employment scenario leaves them dissatisfied and exhausted. Although they are able to secure a net income of Rs. 30,000 per month, they see very little hope or opportunity to increase their income while working with aggregators. Probing further, we found that most do not wish to continue working as drivers in the long run and instead want to start their own business, driving independently or starting something like a provision store, preferably in their native villages or towns. With the rising cost of fuel and declining incentives and earnings, the respondents believe that working in the city does not make sense. They barely see any opportunity of progression working for aggregator companies and believe that starting a small business would help them to earn more income as well as provide more relaxed work conditions.

Table 7.21: Aspirations of platform drivers

Occupation	**No of respondents**	**Preferred location**	**No of respondents**
Continue as a driver	2	Wants to settle in Bangalore	3
Want to start a business of own/ not continue as a driver	5	Wants to settle in native village/town	4
Information unavailable	1	Information unavailable	1
Total	**8**	**Total**	**8**

Grievances with platform companies

The platform drivers we interviewed felt there is not much scope to earn through the current incentive structure. One reason is that the companies create conditions that make it difficult to achieve the targets. For instance (according to drivers), they give longer rides to those who have activated a ride-based incentive plan and shorter rides to those who have activated a distance-based plan. Drivers who have activated a distance-based incentive plan will benefit by travelling more kilometres, while a driver who has opted for a ride-based plan will find it easier to reach his target when he gets short distance trips.[27] But as drivers do not have the freedom to choose their rides, they lose out either way. This

[27] The incentive structure varies: some drivers receive incentives on the basis of distance travelled (in kilometres) while others get them on the basis of number of rides or earnings. For earnings-based incentive, one has to earn Rs. 3000 in 24 hours to be able to get Rs. 5000 as incentive. However, the aggregator's commission is more in this case. For kilometre-based incentives, drivers get Rs. 24 per ride to drive during

strategy further highlights the disinterest of management in making the incentive structure more effective and beneficial for the drivers. Earning incentives requires long working hours, such that it is nearly impossible to earn incentives on most days. One respondent stated:

> *Earning incentive on most of the days is not possible. In a month I am able to earn incentive for only seven days, as that is the number of times I am able to meet the target.*

The drivers' union has not been able to get the incentive structure changed, but they have been instrumental in addressing other issues such as getting the aggregator to look into the dwindling incomes of drivers, especially when shared rides are booked. (Drivers often had to take detours to pick up and drop commuters during the shared rides.) Also, with the intervention of the union they could persuade aggregators to push the customers to complete their KYC, which would help to guard against robberies. The fact that unions have had to push for such steps points to a lack of effort by aggregator companies to take simple measures to ensure the safety of drivers.

One driver expressed discontent with the deposit system recently introduced by the aggregator. Under this arrangement, the company deducts Rs. 200 per day from the drivers' earnings for 15 days, to create a Rs. 3000 'deposit' with the company, which is returned to the driver when he terminates his association with them. The respondent was vociferous in articulating his discontent about this new rule, as he did not seem to have clarity as to why the deposit was being charged in the first place. Such narratives point to a lack of clarity of communication between the aggregator companies and the drivers.

7.3.3 Comparative assessment

On drawing a comparison between the two groups, we find that the driving cohort at Move-up faced greater precariousness in terms of their employment. As private drivers, employment is solely dependent upon the will of the employer. In contrast, aggregators have outlined certain conditions for termination of employment, which does not end abruptly on whim. Move Up trainees faced great difficulties in getting their first job as driver under stable terms and conditions, and many went into other occupations and/ or returned to their native places. In contrast, the aggregators offer stability of income which allows drivers to settle in Bangalore.

---

peak hours, that is from 9 am to 11 am and 5 pm to 9 or 10 pm. So for a driver who has activated a distance-based incentive plan, it works in his favour to travel more kilometres, while a driver who has opted for a ride based plan will find it easier to reach his target when he gets more short distance trips.

The lack of incentive structure for the Move Up trainees working as private drivers, also leaves them with no option to earn extra income within their profession. For Ola and Uber drivers, even though the incentive structure is not very favourable, still have an opportunity to earn more income. Ola and Uber drivers can also opt to work with private agencies as per their convenience to earn additional income. The income earned by most Move Up trainees ranged from Rs. 10,000 to 20,000, which makes it difficult for them to sustain themselves in the city. In contrast, Ola / Uber drivers are able to earn at least Rs. 30,000 per month net and so have an advantage and possibility to sustain themselves in the city. Moreover, Ola and Uber drivers work for more than ten hours a day in order to earn this amount, while the trainee cohort works for a similar number of hours per week yet earns less. Most of the trainee respondents at were not keen on taking up on-demand driving job as they are low-paid (Rs. 8500-Rs. 9000). They also rejected these jobs for the lack of security, and they preferred working as private drivers for greater stability and regularity of employment.

In conclusion, the transport sector offers employment opportunities at an expanding scale, but such employment is highly irregular and informal in nature, creating a level of precarity that defines driving as an occupation. Precarity in this sector is to be seen in terms of a range of conditions rather than having a homogeneous character. For a rural youth who has recently received driver training in a city-based skills centre, precarity is in the form of the low salaries offered to inexperienced drivers. This, combined with the uncertainties of work (as an on-call driver) and inability to sustain life in the city, often results in reverse migration. These youth may find work back in their hometowns, but again in a range of informal jobs which bring little security of employment or opportunities for upward mobility. What stood out from the study of the skills centre-trained drivers was that skilling did not seem to have opened up new opportunities for rural youth. Thus, the promise of an urban-based life of opportunities offered by Move-up remained unfulfilled in the lives of these young drivers.

The study of Ola and Uber drivers showed the other side of this sector, defined by the emerging platform economy. While the lure of aggregators as employers has declined to some extent, this domain still remains an attractive destination for the average driver, given the higher incomes and more or less steady flow of work that is available. However, the study also revealed the structural inequality inherent in this sector, where the margin of earnings of drivers is crucially dependent on aggregators' freedom to reduce incentives in their effort to maintain customer share in a context where the number of service providers is rapidly expanding. Our findings thus suggest (in contrast to the argument in Surie 2017), that the absence of regulations, together with onerous working and employment conditions, creates varying levels of precarity in this sector.

7.4 Conclusion: Labour mobility and precarity

Because of the nature of employment in industries such as organized retail and beauty & wellness, the new service workforce appears to be highly mobile and unstable. In many cases, workers do not stay in the same job for even a few months (especially those who were placed by training centres). One would imagine that from the employer's perspective, such an unstable workforce would be a negative and that they would make more effort to retain workers, who could then build skills and competence and become more valuable to the organization. We posed this question to several managers of employer companies and representatives of industry bodies, who explained that given the large numbers of potential workers always available for recruitment, they have no real incentive to increase wages or provide tenurial security or social insurance as an incentive for retention. According to a placement officer:

> *They are always hiring. If you see xxx company, they hire 200-300 people every month, for customer services and tele-calling roles.*

The high attrition rates reported by HR managers were underwritten by poor working conditions and wages, which provide no motivation to the worker to stick to a job. In addition, many companies hire workers without a written contract, or give only apprenticeship contracts, which means that the employee can be dismissed with less than a day's notice.

While young men in the service sector appear to be particularly footloose, women workers are viewed as more stable (and hence desirable employees), especially in the beauty industry where they may work in the same salon for several years as they gain skills. The beauty industry does offer a career path of sorts, where additional training can move a worker into a higher position with a better salary, so organizations tend to invest in their employees and value a more stable workforce. In contrast, retail does not appear to be a career option for most workers, who lack the educational or other qualifications needed to move into managerial roles. Across these service industries, the precarity of employment, low levels of pay (to sustain themselves in Bangalore), and other onerous working conditions lead to high rates of attrition and a highly mobile workforce with workers moving frequently between companies, types of jobs and locations.

The service sector seems to be the domain of the future, as it is unlikely that the manufacturing sector will record any significant rise in employment, going by recent trends. As more and more young people seek work in the services sector, what is clearly needed is a rethinking of employment conditions in service industries, both in terms of how this sector can become a space for building

careers rather than just holding a job, and also by introducing a regime of regulations suitable to this sector and the specificities of service work which can protect employee interests.

Section 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

This research study has traversed the new skill initiatives of the central and state governments from two ends – by examining skilling programmes and training institutions through which the mandate of youth skill development is being implemented, and by exploring the impact of skill training on the youth with high school education and above, particularly in creating opportunities for mobility. Two important themes frame this enquiry:

First, with the overall structural shift in India's economy – the decline in industrial employment accompanied by growth of the tertiary sector – the emerging workforce and training institutions understandably now look to the domain of services for jobs. Such work, for those with a few years of school education, is inevitably in the lower rungs of the urban service economy services and is typically characterized by a high level of employee turnover and precarity. This project has explored the relationship between skilling and employment and highlighted the multiple vulnerabilities of low-end service workers.

Second, insofar as a central thrust of many skill training programmes is to incorporate rural youth into urban employment, rural-urban migration is central to the ideas of progress and social mobility that are embedded in the new skills script. However, the research presented here shows that the migration process is much more complex than what skill training policies and institutions imagine: the fragility of life and livelihood within the framework of informal work (even within corporatized services) defines the parameters within which youth may aspire to move to cities. Often, they are compelled to turn back due to the paucity of decent, stable and well-paid jobs as well as difficulty of sustaining themselves in the city. Moreover, we found that while training institutions play a significant role in shaping youth aspirations for migration, mentoring or hand-holding mechanisms that could facilitate the transition into the urban service workforce are absent or ill designed.

The Skill India policies that emerged since 2009 have significantly transformed the discursive and institutional domains of skill development. Earlier, skill training and vocational education were imparted through institutions such as the ITIs, which offered long-term courses leading to viable careers in industry and allied areas, or by charitable organizations serving youth who were outside the formal school or college system. The Skill India policy for the first time brought a uniformity and centrality of purpose to the skills agenda, but at the same time disaggregated the skill delivery system amongst many different (especially private) players. What drove Skill India were two factors: one, the rising criticism that liberalization /globalization /privatization policies had led to massive inequalities, and the realization that the current model of economic growth, which was in fact one of 'jobless growth' and 'industry-less growth', had created wealth and opportunities for those who were already

advantaged in terms of education and resources but offered very little by way of livelihood and jobs to those who lacked both.

At the same time, a 'new economy' was emerging, driven by technology and the demand for new consumer-oriented services, even as agriculture stagnated, exacerbating the unemployment problem. This new service economy supposedly called for workers with new skills, and indeed in the opinion of many industry leaders and policy pundits, there is a serious skill deficit in the country. Skill India, as policy and as discourse, attempted to bridge the gap between these two domains, of joblessness and lack of skills. The Skill India policy and the design of skill training programmes spearheaded by the NSDC created a new architecture or 'ecosystem' of institutions – national and state-level skill commissions, industry-led Skill Sector Councils, and funding programmes aimed at imparting skills through a large number of private institutions, run mainly by NGOs and private companies drawing on CSR as well as government resources.

Our research revealed that training programmes in Bangalore skill centres are designed to meet the needs of the emerging labour market in India's metro cities, by offering courses such as sales management, which trains young men and women for the ever-expanding domain of retail; driving to feed the burgeoning private transport and platform economies; and hospitality, housekeeping, security, and beauty & wellness, all catering to consumption-oriented middle-class and affluent urban lifestyles. In addition, some training centres provide training in traditional domains of work such as construction and industrial skills such as plumbing and auto repair. Skill training institutions, in offering these programmes, are to a large extent responding to the emerging market requirements for a new workforce to perform these service functions. We have argued that training centres are playing a significant role in this – their mandate is not only to contribute to the national effort to make youth 'employable', but also to create a workforce that can fit into the evolving 'new service economy' – a space that falls into the 'formal sector' yet is marked by informalization of work and employment. From this perspective, the role of skill training centres becomes important to understand in the broader context of the urban labour market and its governance. For instance, rural youth trained in 'sales management' may be placed in brand outlets in malls or large department stores, where the pay may be as little as Rs. 6000 per month, without an appointment letter or contract and with no security of tenure or insurance.

The study also revealed that skill training centres often do not follow up, as promised, with their graduates once they have completed the course and are placed in jobs, although they are well aware that trainees (especially migrants) need help and hand-holding in transitioning into the urban workspace. Because of poor mentoring and post-training follow-up, several of our respondents had returned to their hometowns or villages after completing the course without having obtained the

certificates from the training centres. Others were not happy with the jobs where they were placed, or had to struggle to find accommodation in the city, without being able to leverage much help from their training institutions. Such cases left us with the impression that skill training has to a large extent become a numbers game – training centres need to produce a certain number of graduates and placements to meet the requirements of their funders (government or CSR), but there was little effort to follow the trajectory of vulnerable trainees once they were released into the urban job market, or more broadly to understand the impact of skill training on the lives of these youth. This disconnect between what training programmes provide and the realities of the job market revealed itself in different ways. In Raichur, for example, several training centres were imparting skills such as tailoring and sales management in a place where there are no garment factories where tailors could be employed and no malls offering retail jobs. This shows that a local job market analysis, which should be a prerequisite for designing skill programmes, had not been undertaken.

We also found that skill training programmes are designed to transform the attitudes and subjectivities of trainees, making them not only into 'skilled' and disciplined urban workers but also into self-managing 'entrepreneurial' subjects who can handle the difficulties of daily life in Bangalore, speak at least a smattering of English, and conduct themselves according to the requirements of the corporate workplace. Students were urged to develop perseverance and 'grit' in order to sustain a lonely, migrant life in an alien city and an unfamiliar work environment. But this kind of 'life skills' training, however valuable, did not prepare the students for the reality of the lower-end services job market, which is highly labour surplus, offering only unregulated and insecure work and marked by the near-absence of labour rights or possibility of collective action. The precarity and informality of this domain is what generates the multiple vulnerabilities for workers in the sectors that we studied. Low wages and insecure employment tenure create a context where workers move quickly from one job to another in search of even a few hundred rupees more or less oppressive working conditions. Or, when they become disappointed with the available opportunities, they return to their hometowns or villages, where they may take up odd jobs, go back to construction work, resume their education or just remain idle.

For women in particular, the post-training trajectory was fraught with multiple obstacles, as parents forced them to return to the home town or village to get married, husbands or fiancés did not wish their wives to work in a profession that is not 'respectable', or they became caught up in the typical cycles of child bearing and rearing. More importantly, however, women seemed to be at the very rough edge of informal work, as their jobs could be terminated almost instantly, or they could be asked to change their functions from helper in a beauty parlour to domestic help in the owner's home, thus regressing into domestic service despite their training as professional beauticians. Similarly, few

women working in retail stores imagined a long-term career in the sector, which was viewed largely as a stop-gap job to earn some money before marriage or as a stepping stone to a different career. Many women service workers felt 'stuck' in the job because they needed to support their natal families – reversing the age-old patriarchal family structure in which unmarried daughters are expected to be dependent on the males of the household.

Despite this bleak scenario, and contrary to the perceptions of middle-class trainers and NGO leaders, rural youth do harbour desires for upward social mobility, and many expressed carefully formulated plans to achieve their dreams. But mobility is not generally imagined as driving an Ola cab or working in Shoppers' Stop. Instead, many trainees expressed a keen interest in getting government or bank jobs and dreamt of working in an air-conditioned office or a chamber with a computer, but of course the reality of what is available to them is very different. Instead, they became one of many salespersons in the large showrooms or department stores that saturate cities like Bangalore; or women who wanted to become beauticians in big salons ended up as helpers in small, owner-managed neighbourhood parlours.

While the aspirations articulated by our respondents may reflect the unrealistic expectations of youth, they also point to a different conclusion. The young people we met are very clear about what constitutes social mobility for them – getting a stable, reasonably well-paying job, and one that is not too demeaning (as most service jobs are) and preferably located near their own place and family. They are painfully aware that getting into government or public sector jobs is very difficult, yet many continue to express this ambition because the alternatives that are available to them are untenable. Objectively, they know that their chances of passing the police or bank personnel exams are very low, but still they try – working to save some money so that they can study further or enrol in coaching classes, moving between Bangalore, where they take up monotonous or stressful jobs and live five to a room to save on living expenses, and their hometowns where they can subsist with family support while they study and help out on the farm.

Thus, instability, informality and fluidity (including 'circular migration') is characteristic not only of informal sector workers but is also of the corporatized service economy, especially in sectors such as organized retail which appears to benefit from having access to a large and mobile pool of potential workers. Despite the high attrition rates, big retail stores, delivery services and the like have no incentive to enhance salaries or train existing employees for better roles because new workers can be easily hired and put to work right away as others leave. In response, workers strategize their 'careers' by moving from job to job, sector to sector, and place to place. These realities of the urban service economy pose particular obstacles to evolving adequate labour regulations or thinking of new policies

or programmes that could protect the interests of service workers while also sustaining employment opportunities.

Finally, the research findings suggest that the Skill India policy itself is not sufficiently anchored in the reality of India's political economy. The preponderance of informal service work – even in the 'organized sector' – makes the future of the 'skilled' service worker almost as bleak as that of the unskilled worker. While greater attention to the relevance of skills to local job markets would certainly make skill training more useful for workers, there is also a need for more focused and critical attention to what kind of jobs are available and to the institutional framework of urban service work. Our findings suggest that skill training is more about pushing needy young people into precarious, informalized and low-paying jobs that are unlikely to lead to a better economic future or social mobility, than about actually equipping them to improve their own lives through stable and decent employment.

Based on these conclusions, we put forward the following policy recommendations:

1. *Content and duration of courses*

   The content of training programmes needs to be revised to equip students with viable skills and knowledge. More in-depth and longer-term training is necessary in domains where multiple levels of skills are used, such as Beauty & Wellness where shallow, short-term training leads young women into the 'helper' category in salons with low pay. More intense and professional training will enable them to compete for jobs which demand a higher level of skill. Across domains, longer duration programmes, such as those traditionally run by the ITIs, would better prepare students to get decent jobs and forge viable career paths.

2. *Internships*

   More hands-on training (especially through internships) is needed in most sectors to better equip youth for the job market. Current apprenticeship programmes need to be re-examined to ensure that they are not just enabling the exploitation of youth labour.

3. *Tap expertise of older training institutions*

   With the coming of the Skill India policy, older training institutions – mostly in the voluntary sector and partially state-aided – were pushed out of the race for funds and newer agencies entered this space. Yet these established institutions may have a better understanding of the local economy's needs, and their knowledge and networks could be consciously incorporated into the skills ecosystem.

4. *Preparation for service sector work*

   Skill centres need to better prepare trainees to face the instabilities of the new service economy, through education about their labour rights and guidance on how to sustain handle employment situations that lack written contracts, minimum wages or job security.

5. *Need for post-placement hand holding by skill centres*

   Skill training centres must go much beyond organizing placement and providing information on PG accommodation; instead they must provide support as their alumni go through the process of settling in the city and into a new job. For instance, they could:

   - provide temporary (one month) accommodation at affordable prices
   - help in locating accommodation which requires minimal advance rent
   - maintain an active follow-up system which works both ways, i.e., which enables alumni to contact skill centre mentors and enables mentors to keep track of alumni for at least a year after joining work.

6. *Align skill training with local economies*

   Skill development programmes need to be based on research on the local economy and should be aligned to local job markets. In a highly diverse economy, there are huge variations in the job market within the same state, as seen in Karnataka. For example, retail, tailoring or beauty/wellness training has very little use in a place like Raichur where there are no malls, salons or garments industry.

7. *Employment regulations*

   Skill centres should be more active in lobbying with governments for better regulation of service sector jobs as well as implementation of existing statutes. Skill centres could also be more proactive in engaging with Sector Skill Councils and partner employers to improve employment conditions, wage levels and workers' rights.

8. *Macro policy recommendations*

- More policy attention needs to be paid to developing labour intensive industries and encouraging local industries/ handicraft/ handloom activities to generate employment, as well as off-farm activities such as dairy and agro-processing, which will directly benefit rural households.
- The National Policy on Skill Development requires a thorough review and rethinking, in view of the many flaws that have been noted by several observers and its apparently negative outcomes of the well-being and employment prospects of India's youth.

References

Ahsan, Ahmed and Ashish Narain. 2007. Labor markets in India: Developments and challenges. In *Job Creation and Poverty Reduction in India: Towards Rapid and Sustained Growth*, edited by Sadiq Ahmed, pp. 293-338. New Delhi: Sage.

Alison, Elizabeth. 1976. Sex-linked earning differentials in the beauty industry. *The Journal of Human Resources* 11 (3): 383-390.

Bageshree, S. 2015. Caste shadows migration patterns in Karnataka, says study. *The Hindu.* July 30, 2015. Retrieved from: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/caste-shadows-migration-patterns-in-karnataka-says-study/article7478173.ece

Bardhan, Pranab. 2009. Notes on the political economy of India's tortuous transition. *Economic and Political Weekly* 44(49): 1251-9.

Basole, Amit *et al.* 2018. *State of Working India Report 2018*. Azim Premji University. https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/state-of-working-india/

Basole, Amit *et al.* 2019. *State of Working India Report 2019*. Azim Premji University. https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/state-of-working-india/swi-2019/

Basole, Amit and Arjun Jayadev. 2019. The employment question in India. Politics, economics, and the way forward. The India Forum, April 5. https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/employment-question-india

Chandrasekhar, C.P. and J. Ghosh 2014. Growth, employment patterns and inequality in Asia: A case study of India. ILO Working Papers 994869853402676, International Labour Organization. https://ideas.repec.org/p/ilo/ilowps/994869853402676.html (last accessed 09-09-19).

Deloitte Consulting. 2013. Changing Times. Changing Roles; Retail HR Gearing up to Become a Strategic Partner. www.deloitte.com/in.

Deori, Banti and Prema Rajagopalan. 2018. Northeastern beauty-care female workers in South India: Experiencing the 'body'. *Indian Journal of Women and Social Change* 2(2): 180-201.

Deshingkar, Priya. 2006. Internal migration, poverty and development in Asia. Sussex: Institute of Development Studies.

Elias, A.S., G. Rosalind and C. Scharff. 2017. *Aesthetic Labour: Rethinking Beauty Politics in Neoliberalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Frankel, Francine. 2005. India's Political Economy: The Gradual Revolution, 1947-2004. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gershon, Ilana. 2014. Selling your self in the United States. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 37(2): 281-295.

Gidwani, Vinay and Priti Ramamurthy. 2018. Agrarian questions of labor in urban India: Middle migrants, translocal householding and the intersectional politics of social reproduction, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45 (5-6): 994-1017.

Gooptu, Nandini. 2009. Neoliberal subjectivity, enterprise culture and new workplaces: Organised retail and shopping malls in India. *Economic and Political Weekly* 44 (22): 45-54.

Gooptu, Nandini, ed. 2013a. *Enterprise Culture in Neoliberal India: Studies in Youth, Class, Work and Media*. London: Routledge.

Gooptu, Nandini. 2013b. Servile sentinels of the city: Private security guards, organized informality, and labour in interactive services in globalized India. *International Review of Social History* 58 (1): 9-38.

Gooptu, Nandini. 2018. Introduction: *JSAD* Special Issue on Skill Development in India. *Journal of South Asian Development* 13(3): 241-248.

Government of India (GoI). 2014. Economic Survey of India 2013-14. Ministry of Finance. Retrieved from: https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/budget2014-2015/survey.asp.

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2000. Human Development in Karnataka Report 1999. Planning Department. Retrieved from: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/human_development_in_karnataka_1999_full_report.pdf.

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2002. Report of the High Powered Committee for Redressal of Regional Imbalances. Government of Karnataka (D.M. Nanjundappa Committee).

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2006. Human Development Report 2005. Retrieved from: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/human_develop_report_karnataka_2005_full_report.pdf

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2009. Urban Development Policy for Karnataka 2009. Urban Development Department. Retrieved from: http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/Urban%20Development%20Policy.pdf

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2013. Economic Survey of Karnataka 2012-13. Ministry of Finance. Retrieved from: https://mofapp.nic.in/economicsurvey/economicsurvey/index.html

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2014. Final Report on Sixth Economic Census 2013-14. Department of Economics and Statistics. Retrieved from: https://des.kar.nic.in/docs/Sixth%20final%20Economic%20Census%20Report.pdf

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2015. Raichur District Human Development Report 2014. Zilla Panchayat Raichur and Planning, Programme Monitoring and Statistics Department. Retrieved from: http://zpraichur.kar.nic.in/HDRs/Raichur-DHDR-English-2014.pdf

Government of Karnataka. 2016a. Raichur District at a Glance 2015-16. Office of the District Statistical Officer, Raichur. Retrieved from: http://www.raichur.nic.in/download/DSO/DAG2015-16.pdf

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2016b. Skill Development Policy for Karnataka 2016. Department of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood. 2016. Retrieved from: http://emptrg.kar.nic.in/Skill%20policy%20final%20(Dec%2015%202016).pdf

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2018. Economic Survey of Karnataka 2017-18. Ministry of Finance. Retrieved from: https://mofapp.nic.in/economicsurvey/economicsurvey/index.html

Government of India (GoI). 2018. Economic Survey of India 2017-18. Ministry of Finance. Retrieved from: https://mofapp.nic.in/economicsurvey/economicsurvey/index.html

Government of Karnataka (GoK). 2019. Economic Survey of Karnataka 2018-19. Ministry of Finance. Retrieved from: https://mofapp.nic.in/economicsurvey/economicsurvey/index.html

Hashim, S.R. 2009. Economic development and urban poverty. *In* India: Urban Poverty Report. Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Oxford University Press.

India Brand Equity Foundation. 2018. Indian Retail Industry Report, July. https://www.ibef.org/download/retail-nov-2018.pdf (last accessed 10-09-19).

Kalasannavar, H S. 2011. Economic Analysis of Small Scale Industries in Karnataka: A Case Study of Hubli- Dharwad. PhD diss., University of Karnataka.

Knight Frank. 2015. Think India. Think Retail - A definitive view on India's retail market. https://content.knightfrank.com/research/317/documents/en/india-retail-report-2646.pdf

Kohli, Atul. 2012. *Poverty Amid Plenty in the New India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kundu, Amitabh. 2011. Politics and economics of urban growth. *Economic and Political Weekly* 46(20): 10-12.

Kundu, Amitabh .2012. Migration and exclusionary urbanization in India. *Economic and Political Weekly* 47 (26-27): 219-227.

Kundu, Amitabh and Niranjan Sarangi. 2007. Migration, employment status and poverty. *Economic and Political Weekly* 42 (04): 299-306.

Maithreyi, R. *et al.* nd. Skills development, social mobility and educational change: a sociological analysis of the effects of the national policy on skills development in India. Draft report and proposal for extension. Downloaded from: https://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/CBPS-E105-Skill-Development-and-Educational-Change-Final.pdf

Maithreyi, R. *et al.* 2017. Skills education and workforce preparation: Examining the disconnects between policy intentions and outcomes in India. Bangalore: Centre for Budget and Policy Studies. Downloaded from: http://cbps.in/wp-content/uploads/Skills-Education-and-Workforce-Preparation-Examining-the-Disconnects-between-Policy-Intentions-and-Outcomes-in-India.pdf

Maitra, Saikat and Srabani Maitra. 2015. Tapping into the 'standing-reserve': A comparative analysis of workers' training programmes in Kolkata and Toronto. *Studies in Continuing Education* 37 (3): 317-332.

Maitra, Saikat and Srabani Maitra. 2018. Producing the aesthetic self: An analysis of aesthetic skill and labour in the organized retail industries in India. *Journal of South Asian Development* 13(3) 337-357.

Mankekar, Purnima and Akhil Gupta. 2016. Intimate encounters: Affective labour in call centres. *Positions* 24(1): 17-43.

Mankekar, Purnima and Akhil Gupta. 2017. Future tense: Capital, labor, and technology in a service industry. *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7(3): 67–87.

Maurya, N.K. and J.V. Vaishampayan. 2012. Growth and structural changes in India's industrial sector. *International Journal of Economics* 6(2): 321-331.

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. 2015. National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. New Delhi: Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India. https://www.msde.gov.in/National-Policy-2015.html

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. 2016. Report of the Committee for Rationalization and Optimization of the Functioning of the Sector Skill Councils, December (3 volumes). New Delhi: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India (Sharda Prasad Report). Retrieved from: https://www.msde.gov.in/report-ssc.html

Mirchandani, Kiran. 2012. *Phone Clones: Authenticity Work in the Transnational Service Economy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Moazami, Yasaman. 2017. Uber in the U.S. and Canada: Is the gig-economy exploiting or exploring labor and employment laws by going beyond the dichotomous workers' classification? *University of Miami and International Law Review.* 24(2): 610-658.

Mukhopadhyay, Partha and K. Sivaramakrishnan. 2013. How to Govern India's Cities: Towards Needed Transformation. Delhi: Centre for Policy Research.

Narayana, Ranganathan. 2011. Globalisation and urban economic growth: Evidence for Bangalore, India. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35(6): 1284-1301.

Narendran, Roshni. 2011. Are the female entrepreneurs of beauty salons in India victims of bad publicity? University of Wollongang, Australia, Archives Paper. Downloaded from: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/22da/a9611757980f3f4e9ba1cf763c08e45612ca.pdf

Niranjan, R. and Shivakumar. 2018. Poverty across socio religious groups in Karnataka by using NSSO data. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts* 6(1): 479-498.

Pani, Narendar and Chidambaram Iyer. 2013. Evaluation of the Processes in the Implementation of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission in Karnataka. Report.L Karnataka Evaluation Authority, Planning Programme Monitoring and Statistics Department. Bangalore: National Institute of Advanced Studies.

Prabhakar, Jai. 2012. Socio Cultural Dimensions of Development in North Karnataka. Centre for Multi Disciplinary Development Research, Dharwad.

Ramaswamy, K.V. and T. Agarwal. 2012. Services-led growth, employment and job quality: A study of manufacturing and service sectors in urban India. Mumbai: Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research.

RoyChowdhury, Supriya. 2003. Public sector restructuring and democracy: State, labor and trade unions in India. *The Journal of Development Studies* 39(3): 29-50.

RoyChowdhury, Supriya. 2015. Bringing class back in: Informality in Bangalore. In *Transforming Classes: Socialist Register 2015,* edited by Leo Panitch and Greg Albo, pp. 73-92. London: Merlin Press.

RoyChowdhury, Supriya. 2017. New paradigms in labour studies: How much do they explain? In *Political Economy of Contemporary India,* edited by R. Nagaraj and S. Motiram, pp.179-202. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

RoyChowdhury, Supriya and B.P. Vani. 2015. Work and Workers in the New Service Economy: A Pilot Study in Bangalore. Bangalore: Institute for Social and Economic Change.

Ruthven, Orlanda. 2018. Getting dividend from demography: Skills policy and labour management in contemporary Indian industry. *Journal of South Asian Development* 13 (3): 315-336.

Sadagopal, Anil. 2016. Skilling India or deskilling India. An agenda of exclusion. *Economic and Political Weekly* 51 (35): 33-37.

Saraf, Radhika. 2016. Skill training or nipping potential in the bud? *Economic and Political Weekly* 51(18): 16-19.

Sen, K. and D.K. Das. 2015. Where have all the workers gone? Puzzle of declining labour intensity in organised Indian Manufacturing. *Economic and Political Weekly* 50(23): 108-15.

Sridhar, Kala and Pavan Srinath. 2010. Is it push or pull? Recent evidence from migration in India. Nepal: South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes.

Sundaram, K. and Suresh Tendulkar. 2005. Poverty outcomes in India in the 1990s. In *The Great Indian Poverty Debate*, edited by Angus Deaton and Valeri Kozel. New Delhi: Macmillan.

Surie, Aditi. 2017. Tech in work: Organising informal work in India. *Economic and Political Weekly* 52 (20): 12-15.

Surie, Aditi. 2018. Are Ola and Uber drivers entrepreneurs or exploited workers? *Economic and Political Weekly* 53 (24): 1-7.

Upadhya, Carol and A.R. Vasavi (eds). 2008. *In an Outpost of the Global Economy: Work and Workers in India's Information Technology Industry*. New Delhi: Routledge.

Upadhya, Carol. 2016. *Reengineering India: Work, Capital, and Class in an Offshore Economy*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Upadhya, Carol. 2018. Cultures of work in India's 'new economy'. In *Critical Themes in Indian Sociology*, edited by S. Srivastava, Y. Arif, and J. Abraham, pp. 151-163. New Delhi: Sage.

Urciuoli, Bonnie. 2008. Skills and selves in the new workplace. *American Ethnologist* 35(2): 211-228.

World Bank, The. 2006. Skill Development in India: The Vocational Education and Training System. New Delhi: The World Bank.

Appendix: Note on Poverty Line Estimation

The poverty line of rural and urban Karnataka according to Planning Commission using 68th round of NSSO data for the year 2011-12 was identified as follows:

Rural Karnataka - Rs 902 (monthly per capita expenditure)
Urban Karnataka - Rs 1089 (monthly per capita expenditure)

Using the Consumer Price Index, from the Economic Survey of Karnataka 2018-19, the poverty line of Karnataka for the year 2017-18 was estimated. Since monthly per capita income=per capita expenditure for poor (as almost the entire income is typically spent on consumption), hence it can be used to estimate poverty.

Estimated Poverty line for the year 2017-18 using the Consumer Price Index (2017-18):

Rural Karnataka- Rs 1468 (monthly per capita expenditure)
Urban Karnataka- Rs 1654 (monthly per capita expenditure)

The methodology for estimation is explained below:

Table 1. Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI- IW)

Month	**2017-18**	**2011-12**
April	826	531
May	829	537
June	835	540
July	845	545
August	849	546
September	845	554
October	849	558
November	856	566
December	846	563
January	845	567
February	844	575
March	842	580
Average (rounded to nearest tens):	**843**	**555**

Sources: Economic Survey of Karnataka 2018-19 (GoK 2019)
Economic Survey of Karnataka 2013-14 (GoK 2014)

Table 2. Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Laborers (CPI- AL)

2017-18	2011-12
1056	649

Sources: Economic Survey of Karnataka 2018-19 (GoK 2019)
Economic Survey of Karnataka 2013-14 (GoK 2014)

1. Estimation of poverty line for rural Karnataka for the year 2017-18 using CPI-AL:
For estimating the poverty line of rural Karnataka for the year 2017-18, CPI-AL is used. At the CPI-AL of 649 for the year 2011-12, the poverty line for rural Karnataka is Rs 902. Hence at the CPI- AL of 1056 for the year 2017-18, the poverty line for Karnataka is :

Rural Poverty line of Karnataka for the year 2011-12 * CPI- AL for the year 2017-18
CPI- AL for the year 2011-12

Rs 902
*1056 = Rs 1468
649

Thus the estimated poverty line for rural Karnataka is Rs 1468.

2. Estimation of poverty line for urban Karnataka for the year 2017-18 using CPI-IW:
For estimating the poverty line for urban Karnataka for the year 2017-18, CPI-IW is used. At the CPI-IW of 555 for the year 2011-12, the poverty line for urban Karnataka is Rs 1089. Hence at the CPI- IW of 843 for the year 2017-18, the poverty line for urban Karnataka is :

Poverty line of urban Karnataka for the year 2011-12 * (Avg) CPI- IW for the year 2017-18
(Avg) CPI- IW for the year 2011-12

Rs1089
*843 = Rs 1654
555

Thus the estimated poverty line for urban Karnataka is Rs 1654.