

T20 Working Session 4: Technology, Services and Skills

Sumandro Chattapadhyay

Research Director

The Centre for Internet and Society

sumandro@cis-india.org

Propositions:

- The problem of creating meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities in today's technology-mediated global economy is not simply one of skill-enabling the existing and emerging workforce to take part in the growing service sector.
- It is crucial to recognise that the contemporary growth of service sector in economies across countries is being fundamentally shaped by access to technology, and access to information and services via technological devices and networks.
- A key barrier to effective access to technology in the developing world is the rent-seeking business strategies that permeate global technological industries: from technologies of communication, to those of agriculture, to those of medicine.
- Apart from removing such barriers, global and national strategies towards skill development for achieving meaningful and sustainable employment must focus on two things: 1) enabling self-learning through open educational resources, and public infrastructures supporting the same, and 2) a broad-based national innovation system that incentivises businesses to create and effectively use intellectual properties, as appropriate for the local context.
- Skill-enabling of new entrants to the labour market (or existing one) must not be understood in terms of special purpose vocational training, that is narrow education for presently existing job opportunities. Neither can online self-learning programmes succeed without building public infrastructures for social learning.
- Various recent commentators, most famously *The Economist*, have flagged the ineffectiveness, and even negative impacts, of the global intellectual property rights regime. An effective and democratic national innovation system must neither treat innovation in a sector-specific manner, nor as a general strategy driven by the needs of particular industries in a particular stage of their development of operations and IP ownership.
- Skilling of the existing and emerging workforce must enable them to take part in the global knowledge economy, and its technological basis, in a holistic way.
- Openness in policy-making and collaborative implementation, not only between public and private agencies but also between public agencies, are absolutely essential for the success of any such initiative to develop skills of the national workforce.