NR23 / Human Capital and India’s Growth Trajectory: Opportunities and Imperatives

Topic : Research

Chair : Aparna Kulkarni (St. Xavier's College)

Second Chair : Salil Kulkarni (St. Xavier's College)

Third Chair : Latika Shetty (St. Xavier's College)

Fourth Chair : Shambhavi Singh (St. Xavier's College)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Human Capital and India’s Growth Trajectory: Opportunities and Imperatives

Human capital has increasingly become central to India’s development story, not only as a measure of the population’s capabilities but also as a reflection of the country’s aspirations for a more inclusive and productive future. In India, human capital represents the education, skills, health, and overall wellbeing that individuals carry with them into the labour market. With a uniquely young demographic profile—where a majority of citizens are in their working age—India has a remarkable opportunity to translate this demographic strength into economic advantage. Yet, the realisation of this potential depends on how effectively the country nurtures and equips its people.

While India has expanded access to schooling and broadened its health infrastructure over the years, the quality of these services continues to vary widely. Many children still struggle with basic literacy and numeracy, and the gap between what the education system provides and what the job market demands remains significant. Rapid technological shifts have created a growing need for digital and vocational skills, but training systems often fall short of industry expectations. Health challenges—such as malnutrition, uneven healthcare access, and the burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases—add further pressure by reducing productivity and limiting opportunities for millions.

A large share of India’s workforce remains in the informal sector, where workers typically have limited social protection, fewer opportunities for skill improvement, and unstable earnings. This restricts the full development of their human capital and widens socio-economic inequalities. If India is to move confidently towards becoming a knowledge-driven and innovation-led economy, it must prioritise people at every stage of life. Strengthening early childhood care, improving teaching quality, expanding skill development, enhancing public health systems, and ensuring gender and regional equity are essential steps. Ultimately, India’s growth will be shaped not just by its demographic numbers, but by how well it invests in its people.

Objectives, Research Questions, and Scientific Relevance

This study sets out to understand how India is shaping the abilities, skills, and wellbeing of its people, and how these factors influence the country’s broader development goals. One of its key objectives is to look at how well current systems of education, training, and healthcare are preparing individuals for today’s fast-changing world of work. It also aims to uncover the gaps—whether institutional, economic, or demographic—that prevent India from fully tapping into the potential of its large and youthful population. Ultimately, the study hopes to identify practical policy directions that can support stronger and more equitable human capital development.

The research is guided by three core questions:

Are India’s existing human capital systems adequate for the demands of a dynamic labour market?
What social, demographic, and institutional barriers limit the effective use of India’s human resources?
Which policy approaches can meaningfully improve human capital outcomes across different regions and communities?

Papers expected:

1. Comparing the frontline care workers model in global south with reference to ASHA and Anganwadi workers in India

2. Brain drains and dual effects of emigration on India’s human capital

3. India’s NEP 2020 and its comparison with global south countries pertaining to improving pathways to formal sector employment

4. Law without order: A comparative analysis of bidirectional nature of policing outcomes and human capital development in global south

Names, affiliations, and email addresses of co-chairs:

1. Dr. Aparna Kulkarni - St Xavier's College, Mumbai, aparna.kulkarni@xaviers.edu
2. Mr. Salil Kulkarni - St. Xavier's college, Mumbai, salilkulkarni24@gmail.com
3. Ms. Latika Shetty - St. Xavier's college, Mumbai, latikashetty246@gmail.com
4. Ms. Shambhavi Singh - St. Xavier's college, Mumbai, sshambhavi.0810@gmail.com

Panel chair, Dr. Aparna Kulkarni will present a paper co-authored with Ms. Radha Rasam (St. Xavier's College).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Title of the panel: Human Capital and India’s Growth Trajectory: Opportunities and Imperatives

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