

Characterizing the Skills Space of Bangalore's Urban Informal Labour Market

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Abstract

The vast majority of India's labor force is comprised of informal workers. Apart from the lack of employment/social security benefits, such workers are also characterized by high barriers to job entry and low job mobility. Whereas in formal labor markets worldwide, there are pathways to advertise skills required for different jobs and skills possessed by different workers, the skill space of informal workers in India is largely silent. Our study has a two-fold objective -- first to apply a bottom-up crowdsourcing approach to mapping the space of skills, qualities and personality traits among Bangalore's informal workers; and second to assess the applicability of machine learning tools like recommendation systems and adaptive surveys to a public policy context in India. Fieldwork for the project was carried out in Bangalore, including representative sampling in slums to study the labour supply side and purposive sampling of skills training centers to study the labour demand side. The longer term objective of the project is to understand the skills and opportunity space, automatically generate resumes for prospective workers and develop tools for matching workers to jobs and recommending appropriate vocational training courses to workers.

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