

Changing World of Work - Digitalisation, Workers' Education and Trade Unions

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Evolving Labour Issues

- *Reflection for participants - what kind of issues most commonly emerge from workers today, that may not have been relevant twenty years ago?*
- The technology and jobs tussle - Work is assisted by, and in some cases replaced by, **artificial intelligence**
- Mid-management moving towards automation and algorithmic management
- **Multi-country employers**, lack of international regulation to govern them
- The emergence of new technology and algorithmic tools is also **creating a new set of jobs** - that build and teach those algorithms
- With individualisation of work, there are **lesser physical spaces to collect and meet**
- **New types of work in the digital economy** - by definition online
- **Increasing surveillance** of all types of work
- Data protection and data privacy issues - **the right to “Disconnect”**
- Privatisation and contractualisation

Has the World Gone Online?

- The Covid19 pandemic made people across the world use technology tools like never before
- This pandemic coincided with a boom in digital economy, and also a boom in development of digital infrastructure among grassroots communities, unions, collectives, to the extent possible
- Is connectivity moving faster than literacy? Many young workers in rural and urban areas are connected to the internet and to social media today. Apps that allow usage in regional language, the video format on youtube, facebook, instagram and Moj, and voice notes on whatsapp - have been revolutionary in circumventing the “english literary” barrier to usage of technology
- Though a large swathe of the workforce remains disconnected - which makes it important to have complete understanding of the access and capacity of intended users, to be able to adopt the right technological tools

Evolution of the Union Movement/Organising Methods

- Unionisation and organising in India comes with rich history - we're **past the 70s and 80s where the socialist, worker solidarity sentiment was in common parlance**, in pop culture.
- In the post liberalisation era, where **individualistic, capitalistic, hustle-centric work culture is prevalent**. The challenge then, is to make unionisation attractive and relevant to our generation of workers, as the relevance and importance of organising action today is more than ever
- **The stigma** - unionising is often considered something that the “poor” and “blue collar” workers resort to - being seen as a union worker may be harmful to a workers’ social status, in the current context, where all of us want to be respected for our work and move up the career ladder
- New labour issues, **changes in labour legislation** is putting new stresses on the union movement

So how can digital tools help?

What are “digital tools”?

- **Digital tools are more than just social media**
- **Not a replacement for ideation**, aides the planning and execution of ideas
- **Technology enabled solutions that help unions in their work**
 - Capacity building
 - Awareness building
 - Membership management
- **Whatsapp/telegram/signal** groups for coordination among local union chapters
- Whatsapp/telegram/signal broadcast lists to send these videos to large numbers of people
- **Social media pages** to spread awareness videos about the latest, most relevant issues and build a larger community which is not dependant on phone numbers. This depends on usage of social media apps among the targeted community
- **Video conferencing software** for trainings and public meetings
- **MIS and database management software** to manage membership details
- **Receipt generation systems** to manage fees payment
- Tools that **enable virtual voting** for internal elections
- **Tech will not save us - but it might help**

Digital tools - why should we care?

- **Evolving trends in the world of work**
 - New employment relationships in old forms of work
 - New forms of work emerging in the digital economy
- **Countering the co-opting of technology tools by the government and corporations**
 - In this age of technology driving a lot of decisions and their execution, unions need to own and redefine what technology means and should do, in context of worker welfare and workers' rights
- **Cross learning** from international experience
- **Cost effective** large gatherings
- **Circumventing union busting by employers**
 - Digital meetings become necessary when employers deploy methods to actively break up or disallow public meetings

Examples of successful usage of digital tools from across the world

- ACTU (Australia) and KSPI indonesia - Wrapping the core issue of labour rights, within larger social issues that capture the interest of a wide group of people viz. Climate change and violence against women.
- FES (Germany) - Monthly and fortnightly webinars for the larger community of researchers and scholars, on topical issues
- ASETUC in Southeast Asia - developing an online application for organizing which can establish, track and offer union services
- India - migrant worker telephonic helplines, database management for members

Mind it! Dos and Dont's for using technology tools

- *Reflection for participants - what digital tools have you used, attempted to use in your respective worker constituencies, what challenges have presented themselves in the process? How are they overcoming them?*
- **Know your goal** - smooth logistics? General awareness? Targeted meeting?
- **Know your platform** - not all platforms useful for the same type of dissemination. It's alright to evolve and adapt
- **Know your audience** - The target user is key - e.g. a video can be more accessible and easily understandable compared to a parcha, but requires intended audience to possess smart phones
- **Know your resources** - hardware, human resources, time, capacity, pro bono
- **Inclusive Approach** - technology is notorious for leaving behind constituencies that are traditionally disadvantaged minority religions, persecuted tribes and communities, women workers - lesser literacy and opportunities transfers to reduced digital literacy as well. Important to make sure digital tools are used where necessary, and the work of improving digital literacy is also done
- **Capacity development** - linked to the question of sustainability is the crucial aspect of developing capacity of the worker community to own and run these tech solutions on their own.

Mind it! Dos and Dont's for using technology tools

- **Sustainability of the method** - thinking about sustaining the usage of a digital tool is crucial to its success as a tool for organising
 - Who will update and run the website?
 - What resources are needed to regular social media content and how can we gather them?
 - Who will moderate and run the whatsapp or telegram group
- **Worker consent** - while recording workers, while collecting their personal data
- **Data protection and data rights of union members**
 - Being mindful of using faces of union members and workers in publicly available vidoes and photos - avoiding that if not necessary
 - Being mindful of the scope of access to worker databases - while maintaining a digital database of workers for example, creates ease of managing membership, protecting that database from freely accessible to non-union members is a responsibility
- **Internet safety** - spam emails, phishing, computer virus, hacking, social media trolling

Thank you!

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