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ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Skill development in India: Challenges, current, and future perspectives

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Abstract

The realization of Viksit Bharat 2047 is contingent upon skill development, given India's goal of being a developed nation by the time it celebrates its 100th anniversary of independence. In order to empower these groups, skill development is essential, as highlighted by the four pillars of Viksit Bharat: Yuva (Youth), Mahila (Women), Garib (Poor), and Kisan (Farmers). In India's skill development ecosystem, however, issues including outdated curriculum, poor industry alignment, limited access to education, and regional imbalances still exist. India's goal for 2047 necessitates an environment that supports innovation, digitization, and sustainable growth in the future. To build a strong and dynamic workforce, technology skills, career training, and entrepreneurial education must all be integrated. It will be essential to be able to quickly reskill and upskill when global economic models change. Therefore, it is essential to view skill development as a fundamental element of India's goal to become a developed and powerful nation by 2047 rather than just a necessary economic measure. This research paper explores the critical landscape of skill development in India, emphasizing its importance in driving economic growth and enhancing workforce capabilities. It examines the current status of skill development, highlighting various government initiatives. However, the study also uncovers persistent challenges, including infrastructure gaps, insufficient industry-academia collaboration, skill gaps, financial limitations, and regional disparities. Looking ahead, the paper discusses the promising future of skill development, with a focus on technological advancements, particularly in emerging sectors like AI and robotics, and the increasing need for digital skills.

Keywords: Skill development, Four pillars of Viksit Bharat, Skill gap, Emerging sectors.

Introduction

In light of the growing global competitiveness of nations, aptitude or skill development has become an essential area of concern. It is seen as a crucial response to two significant developmental issues: reducing unemployment and poverty (King & McGrath, 2002). Given the major transitional difficulties that India faces, aptitude or skill development is especially important for growing economies like its own. These difficulties include building a democracy that respects human rights and tolerance and developing human capital to meet the needs of a world that is getting more and more competitive (Horwitz, 2013). As a result, skill development—which is the act of determining skill gaps in the workforce and developing or acquiring the abilities required for certain trades or professions—becomes increasingly important. Goals for India's National Skill Development Initiative envisioned that approximately 3.1 million people may currently receive skill development opportunities in India annually. India is capable of hosting 15 million people a year. By 2022, 500 million skilled workers are to be produced in India. As a result, programs for skill development must be able to accommodate more participants. The initiatives aimed at developing skills will effectively utilize diversity and diminish distinctions between genders, urban and rural areas, organized and unorganized labor, and traditional and modern work environments. Additionally, these initiatives will contribute to the availability of skilled laborers who can adapt quickly to the ever-evolving demands of the labor market and technological advancements. This approach will support excellence and gratify the demands

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of the knowledge-based economy. The program for skill development does not differentiate between commercial and public delivery methods; instead, it prioritizes customer choice, accountability, and competition among training providers. Programs for improving one's skills contribute to social progress, economic growth, and employment creation. An essential part of all-encompassing labor, social, economic, and policy initiatives will be a skill development policy. Its formation aims to provide a structure that will facilitate enhanced collaboration among various ministries, states, businesses, and other relevant

India urgently needs a robust skill development initiative, given its large youth population, many of whom are unemployed. If their potential is not effectively harnessed, they risk falling into issues like drug addiction and other anti-social behaviors—something the country cannot afford. The success of important national initiatives like Made in India, Digital India, and Smart Cities depends on having a trained labor force. As China is rapidly abandoning its manufacturing bastion owing to rising costs, an appreciating Yuan, and demographic difficulties, India is provided with a perfect chance to establish itself as the next global manufacturing powerhouse. To seize this opportunity, it is imperative to create a workforce that is skilled and productive, meeting international standards of quality and efficiency. This requires an integration of skills and training with the formal education system. Additionally, providing employability-enhancing skills to those currently in college will better prepare them for the job market. With many of the world's major economies facing an ageing population, India has the chance to serve the growing global demand for a young, skilled workforce. In order to address these challenges and identify the opportunities, it is necessary to understand the existing research on skill development, its impact on employability, and the means through which it can be integrated into the educational system to meet the evolving demands of the global market.

Research objectives

- To shed light upon the current landscape of skill development in India
- To discuss the importance of skill development in enhancing workforce productivity and employability
- To identify and assess the major challenges in skill development in India
- To explore the future prospects of skill development in India

Review of literature

The literature on skills development highlights the important role of skills in improving entrepreneurship, employment, and economic growth. Research by Mittal and Raghuvaran (2021) demonstrates the importance of integrating e-learning into higher education, which can improve business skills such as problem-solving, change, and communication. These skills are essential for professional and business success. Furthermore, Sousa and Wilks (2018) demonstrate the importance of digital skills and related technologies, such as skills and knowledge, which have become essential for people and businesses to succeed in a rapidly evolving digital world. Despite recognition of the importance of these skills, many challenges remain in measuring learning as noted by Birdthistle *et al*. (2007) identified inadequate organization and inadequate teacher preparation as factors influencing the effectiveness of business training programs. These challenges highlight the need to better align educational materials with business needs, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Skill development programs have demonstrated notable advantages, yet there are still areas where their implementation falls short. Research studies, such as those conducted by Kaur & Dogra (2022), highlight the positive impact of skill development missions in India on productivity and global competitiveness. However, challenges related to student retention continue to persist. Furthermore, research conducted by Dayal (2016) and Furtado (2018) highlights ongoing challenges, including a mismatch between the skills required in the labor market and the skills possessed by job seekers, as well as geographical and infrastructural obstacles. Overcoming these challenges necessitates more effective collaborations between the private and public sectors, better infrastructure, and increased training for educators. According to Misra (2018), skill development plays a crucial role in sustaining India's economic growth, especially through vocational and technical training. Nevertheless, Singh & Sanjeev (2017) stress the importance of considering both formal and informal sectors to maximize the advantages of initiatives like «Make in India» in terms of employability.

Research gaps

In spite of the significance of talent improvement in accomplishing the targets of Viksit Bharat 2047, numerous research gaps persist. First, there's a need to take a look at how modern skill development packages align with the national desires mentioned in this initiative. In addition, the sustainability of those packages warrants similar research, especially regarding their lengthy-term effects and funding mechanisms. Regional disparities additionally pose demanding situations; therefore, understanding how nearby contexts have an effect on application implementation is essential. Moreover, complete frameworks are required to evaluate the effect of those projects on monetary increase and employment. Finally, exploring the combination of emerging technology with talent development applications could justify future demands. The subsequent sections of the paper explore the multifaceted role of skill development

Figure 1: Age-wise employability (18-25) source: Skill India Report 2024

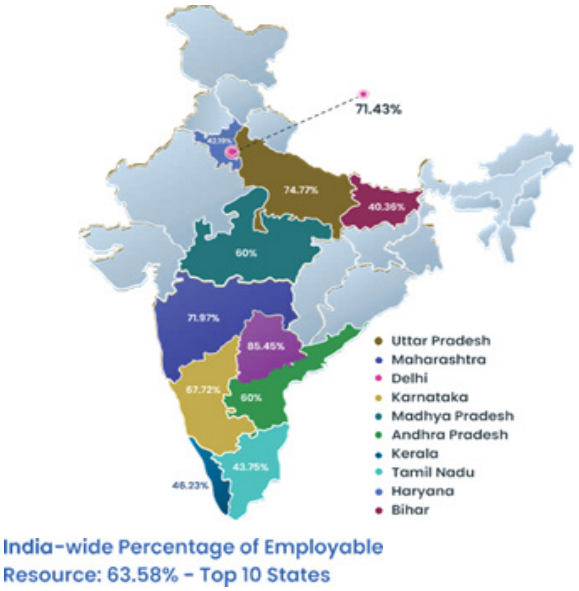


Figure 2: 22 to 25 Age group

in advancing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Skill development and employability

According to the Skill India Report 2024, the age-wise and city-wise employability data in India showcases the diverse distribution of skilled workers across different regions and states. In the 18 to 21 age group, states such as Telangana, Kerala, and Maharashtra exhibit strong youth employability. For the 22 to 25 age group, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Delhi lead, reflecting a significant increase in employable youth as they progress in their careers. In the 26 to 29 age range, Gujarat, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra remain at the forefront, indicating continued employability in older age cohorts. This highlights the importance of recognizing regional differences in employability, calling for tailored approaches to address these variations. Cities like Pune, Bengaluru, and other urban areas in Maharashtra consistently demonstrate high employability among younger workers, while Lucknow emerges as a key hub in the 22 to 29 age range. However, this data predominantly reflects urban trends, and rural areas must also be considered for a comprehensive view of the workforce.

The findings in the report suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to enhancing employability may not be effective. Instead, strategies tailored to specific regions and age groups are required. Skill development programs should cater to the unique needs of industries in different regions, particularly in states with lower employability rates, to create a more flexible and skilled workforce. Policymakers, educators, and industries should factor in regional and demographic differences when developing inclusive employment policies. These insights offer a flexible and skilled workforce. Policymakers, educators, and industries

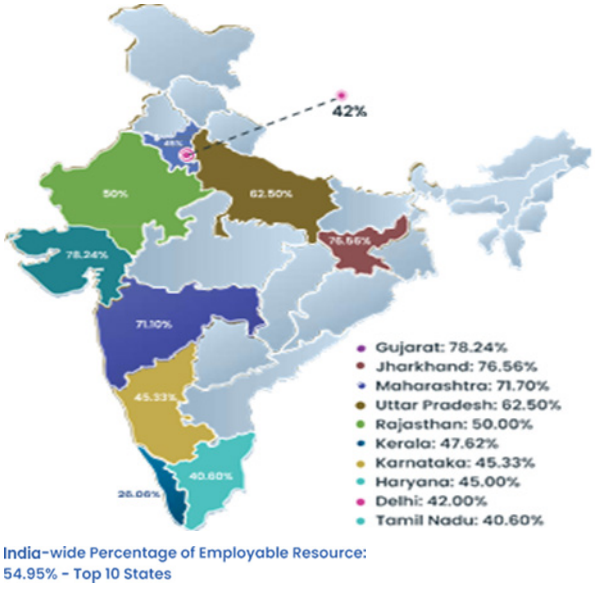


Figure 3: 26 to 29 Age group

should factor in regional and demographic differences when developing inclusive employment policies.

These insights offer a foundation for data-driven decisions in education, skill development, and employment policy formulation, both at the national and regional levels. In terms of high-performing candidates, Maharashtra stands out with a 73.03% score in WNET (Workforce Net) tests, closely following Haryana, which leads with an impressive 76.47%. Other states like Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka, and Punjab also show a strong presence of top-performing candidates,

highlighting a broad distribution of talent across the country. Pune leads among cities, with 75% of candidates scoring above 60%, followed by Bengaluru and Mumbai, which are also recognized as key urban talent hubs. Cities like Delhi, Trivandrum, and Lucknow also feature prominently, showing a wider geographic distribution of well-performing candidates beyond traditional metro areas.

The data points to a decentralization of skills, with high-scoring individuals emerging from non-metropolitan areas like Guntur, Chandigarh, and Chennai. This challenges the traditional view that urban centers are the main contributors to India's skilled workforce. The broader geographic spread of talent opens up new opportunities for businesses to tap into untapped resources in non-urban regions, potentially boosting economic growth and reducing dependence on metropolitan areas. For policymakers and educators, it is crucial to focus on nurturing talent in these regions with targeted skill development programs, furthering the country's goal of inclusive growth. To sum up, the age-wise and city-wise employability data in India highlights regional diversity in skilled resources. Telangana, Kerala, and Maharashtra excel in the 18-21 age group, while Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Delhi lead in the 22-25 bracket. Gujarat, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra show strong employability in the 26 to 29 range. Cities like Pune and Bengaluru consistently perform well, with Lucknow emerging as a talent hub. The data suggests a need for region-specific strategies and skill development programs. High-scoring candidates are also found in non-metropolitan areas, reflecting the decentralization of talent and opening new opportunities for businesses and inclusive growth across India.

Overall, this data indicates a more balanced Indian job market, where skilled talent is emerging from both urban and non-urban areas. This presents opportunities for businesses and regions to benefit from a more distributed and inclusive workforce.

Initiatives taken by the government

The Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has extended the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) for an additional five years, from 2021-22 to 2025-26 (Yojana, 2017). This extension reflects the government's dedication to creating employment and reducing unemployment across India. PMEGP promotes entrepreneurship by providing financial assistance for establishing new businesses or upgrading existing ones in both urban and rural areas. The scheme offers subsidized margin money for projects, with maximum project costs capped at Rs 50 lakhs for manufacturing and Rs 20 lakhs for services. Banks finance the remaining amount after beneficiaries make their contributions. The initiative has achieved considerable success, surpassing its targets from 2019-20 to 2022-23, underscoring its impact on fostering entrepreneurial growth and economic development in various sectors.

Under PMEGP, the Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP) plays a crucial role in equipping aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge needed to start and manage their businesses. EDPs are conducted by approved Implementing Agencies (IAs) and overseen by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). These training sessions, which cover topics like business planning, market research, financial management, and legal requirements, are available to diverse groups, including women, SC/ST/OBC communities, minorities, and both rural and urban populations. Participation in EDP also qualifies individuals to apply for PMEGP loans and subsidies to kick-start their enterprises.

Additionally, the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) offers unsecured loans up to Rs 10 lakhs to support small business ventures in manufacturing, trade, services, and agriculture. PMMY has three loan categories: Shishu (up to Rs 50,000), Kishore (up to Rs 5 lakhs), and Tarun (up to Rs 10 lakhs). The scheme has seen remarkable growth since its launch, with over 6.23 crore loans sanctioned in FY 2022-23, totaling Rs 4,50,423.66 crores. By February 2024, PMMY had sanctioned over 5.32 crore loans, disbursing Rs 4,26,908.55 crores, showcasing its significant role in promoting financial inclusion and economic empowerment across India. Various Indian states have developed their own programs to support entrepreneurship and skill development. For instance, Maharashtra's State Innovation Society (MSInS) and Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (MCED) provide financial support and training, particularly in rural areas. Karnataka's Elevate 100 program mentors and funds startups, while Gujarat's iCreate focuses on manufacturing and agriculture startups, aided by subsidies under the Gujarat Industrial Policy. Other states, like Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, have also established strong ecosystems for supporting startups, with programs focussing on infrastructure, mentorship, and funding for women and social enterprises.

In terms of skill development, state-level programs aim to enhance employability and drive economic growth. Maharashtra's Kaushalya Setu offers vocational training, while Gujarat's Mukhyamantri Apprentice Yojana provides apprenticeship opportunities. Kerala's Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP) and Tamil Nadu's Skill Development Corporation offer certifications in various sectors, helping individuals enhance their career prospects. Together, these initiatives contribute to sustainable economic development nationwide.

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), established in 2014, plays a key role in cultivating a skilled workforce to support India's economic growth. It focuses on fostering entrepreneurship and providing individuals with the skills needed to succeed in a rapidly

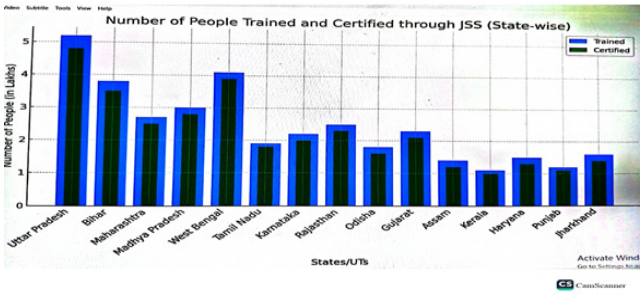
Table 1: The number of persons who have benefitted from JSS training and certification programs

State/UT	*Total trained (in lakhs)*	*Certified (in lakhs)*
Uttar Pradesh	5.2	4.8
Bihar	3.8	3.5
Maharashtra	2.7	2.5
Madhya Pradesh	3.0	2.8
West Bengal	4.1	3.9
Tamil Nadu	1.9	1.8
Karnataka	2.2	2.0
Rajasthan	2.5	2.3
Odisha	1.8	1.6
Gujarat	2.3	2.1
Assam	1.4	1.2
Kerala	1.1	1.0
Haryana	1.5	1.3
Punjab	1.2	1.1
Jharkhand	1.6	1.4

Source: JSS official website

evolving economy. Here, an example of an initiative taken by the Government of India under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. is Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS). JSS offers courses tailored to local needs and demands, keeping in mind the natural resources available, local industries, and the existing skills of individuals. The courses range from tailoring, embroidery, food processing, handicrafts, healthcare, and IT skills to agro-based technologies. The flexibility of these programs makes them accessible to the target groups. The curriculum is designed to foster practical skills that can lead to both self-employment and placement in existing industries. The Jan Shikshan Sansthan operate independently; however, they get funding from the government through central grants. A governing board, including members from academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local industry, leads each JSS. With this concept, programs may be locally tailored to meet local requirements and still meet national skill development objectives. Over time, JSS has considerably increased its visibility throughout India. According to the most recent statistics available, more than 200 Jan Shikshan Sansthans are operating in diverse states and Union Territories, each of which serves the local population's particular needs for skill development.

JSS centers are distributed according to state in order to guarantee broader accessibility, particularly in those with lower rates of literacy and more pronounced economic inequality. For example, because of their bigger populations and greater rates of rural poverty, states like Madhya



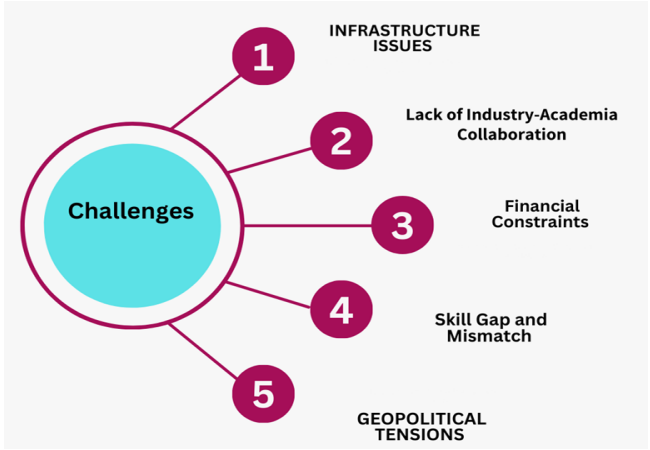
Source: Author's creation

Figure 4: Number of people Trained and Certified through JSS (State-wise)

Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar have more JSS centers than other states. The quantity of individuals trained and certified by JSS as a result of its programs serves as a barometer for its efficacy. Based on the most recent information available on the website of JSS, the number of persons who have benefitted from JSS training and certification programs is broken down by state below.

This table and bar graph showcase how JSS has managed to train and certify individuals across the nation. The variations between states reflect the difference in focus areas, population density, and demand for specific skills in different regions. Currently, there are 290 JSSs operating nationwide, with 69 of them being found in regions where tribes predominate. In the State of Maharashtra, now, there are 21 functional JSS facilities, out of which four are developed in tribal-dominated districts of Maharashtra State.

India faces several challenges in skill development, hindering its transition to a knowledge-based economy and impacting the employability of its workforce (Sharma, 2018; Yadav, 2016). The current education system has been criticized for not being skill-orientated, leading to the production of unemployable youth and endangering economic growth and sustainability (Yadav, 2016).



Source: Author's creation

Figure 5: Challenges faced by India in Skill Development

Apart from the infrastructure issues, one of the primary challenges is the supply-driven approach to skill development, with insufficient attention paid to demand-side factors (Sharma, 2018). This mismatch between skills imparted and industry requirements creates a significant skill gap. Additionally, there are gender disparities in skill development and employment opportunities, as highlighted by the India Skills Report 2017 (Chandra, 2019). Rural women, in particular, face several barriers to accessing skill development programs (Prabhakar & Nimesh, 2022). To address these challenges, several recommendations have been proposed. These include making vocational education compulsory from the 8th standard, creating national training funds to collect levies from organized firms for skill development in the informal sector, and developing versatile vocational skills accompanied by continuous renewal of competencies (Sharma, 2018; Yadav, 2016). The government has launched initiatives like the Skill India campaign, aiming to train over 40 crore candidates in various skills by 2022 (Agrawal *et al*., 2020). However, effective implementation of these programs remains a challenge, requiring concerted efforts from all stakeholders to create an origination-focused environment for eminent skill development (Shrotriya *et al*., 2018).

Role of Skill Development in Viksit Bharat 2047

In the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, skill development stands as a cornerstone that will enable India to realize its full potential across various dimensions: economic growth, environmental sustainability, social progress, and good governance. The foundation of a strong and resilient economy is the development of a workforce that is both adaptable and skilled in the technologies, industries, and innovations of the 21st century. A well-trained workforce not only spurs entrepreneurship but also drives innovation and competitiveness, critical factors in transforming India into an economic powerhouse. Skill development programs that focus on advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, and sustainable business practices will ensure that citizens are not just job explorers but also job originators. This economic empowerment will lead to better opportunities and a higher standard of living, fulfilling the aspirations of a developed India.

Environmental sustainability, a key pillar of Viksit Bharat, requires specialized skills to address pressing challenges such as climate change, conservation, and biodiversity protection. Through skill development in green technologies, sustainable farming practices, and environmental management, India can prepare its workforce to not only mitigate the impacts of climate change but also innovate in fields such as renewable energy and ecological restoration. A workforce that is trained in these areas will be able to drive the country's transition to a clean and green economy, preserving natural resources for future generations while also creating new avenues for growth in green industries.

Social progress in Viksit Bharat hinges on inclusive skill development that reaches all sections of society, ensuring dignity and equal opportunities for every citizen. Programs focused on upskilling marginalized communities, women, and rural populations can help bridge the gap between different social strata. An inclusive approach to skill development will create a harmonious society where individuals from diverse backgrounds contribute equally to the nation's growth while also fostering respect for India's rich cultural heritage. By equipping people with the necessary skills, society can address issues like unemployment, social inequality, and regional disparities, creating a more just and equitable future.

Good governance is essential for managing the complexities of a developed nation, and this is where the role of skill development in governance becomes critical. Training in data management, policy analysis, and public administration will ensure that government officials and institutions are agile, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the people. Informed decision-making, grounded in credible data, will allow governance systems to act swiftly in areas requiring correction, improving overall national efficiency. Furthermore, skill development that emphasizes teamwork, empathy, and consultation will nurture a culture of collaboration between the government and its citizens, fostering trust and ensuring that governance systems are more reflective of the public's needs.

Conclusion

To conclude, skill development is not just an economic tool but a holistic force that can drive India's growth across multiple dimensions. It prepares the workforce for a competitive global economy, equips individuals with the expertise to address environmental challenges, promotes social equality through inclusive learning, and strengthens governance through improved administrative capabilities. One such project that aims to support skill development and economic empowerment is the Skill India Mission. It has improved the talents of 5.4 million and trained 14 million youth. As per the Press Information Bureau, India 2024, In shaping a Viksit Bharat, the recent budget has allocated funds for infrastructure, Agriculture, Education and vocational training. Thus, the focus on skill development will empower citizens to actively contribute to the nation's progress, ensuring that the India of 2047 is prosperous, sustainable, inclusive, and well-governed.

Suggestions for Future Research

In light of the findings presented in the conclusion, the below-mentioned areas for future research can provide valuable information to optimize skills development initiatives and improve employability, ultimately contributing to the

successful implementation of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision:

Effectiveness of Government Initiatives

It is necessary to evaluate the enduring impact of government skill development programs on employability across various demographic groups.

Industry Partnerships

Examining public-private partnerships can identify how collaboration enhances skill training to meet industry needs and improve job placement rates.

Sector-Specific Skills

Extensive research is needed to identify skill requirements in emerging industries, ensuring that training programs align with current job market demands.

Informal Learning

Exploring the role of informal learning experiences, such as internships and apprenticeships, can provide insights into their impact on employability alongside formal training.

Technological Integration

Assessing the integration of advanced technologies into skill development programs will help evaluate their effect on learning outcomes and workforce readiness.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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