

Empowering Growth: Investing in Education and Upskilling India's Workforce for Tomorrow

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SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction and Welcoming Participants

- **Tasmita Sengupta**, Research Associate, CUTS International.

Setting the Context

- **Sanchita Chatterjee**, Fellow, CUTS International.

Moderator

- **Samar Verma**, Distinguished Fellow CUTS International

Key Speakers

- **Partha Pratim Mitra**, Former Principal Labour and Employment Advisor Ministry of Labour and Employment, India
- **Shashi Bala**, Senior Fellow V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, India
- **Mandvi Kulshreshtha**, Program Advisor Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, India
- **Sonal Jaitly**, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Lead MicroSave Consulting, India

Key Takeaways

- 1. Bridging the Skills Gap for Workforce Relevance:** As industries evolve, the gap between academic training and market demands grows. Continuous reskilling every five to six years is now essential for professionals to stay competitive. Aligning education with industry needs and fostering lifelong learning will ensure graduates are equipped with the skills necessary for employment in an ever-changing job market.
- 2. Closing the Skill Gap through Public-Private Collaboration:** Bridging the skill gap requires strong public-private partnerships, with initiatives like the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme and ITI modernisation supported by private sector expertise. To remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market, the workforce must be equipped with both digital and soft skills, making digital literacy a key focus in educational curriculums.
- 3. India's Rise as a Global Capability Centre Hub:** India is rapidly evolving into a hub for Global Capability Centres (GCCs), shifting from traditional back-office functions to advanced R&D and innovation roles. The number of GCCs is expected to surge from 1,600 to 3,000 by 2030, significantly increasing employment from 1.6 million to 4 million. This expansion underscores India's growing technological leadership and strengthens its position as a strategic location for global enterprises.
- 4. NEP 2020's Focus on Vocational Education:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises vocational training and flexible learning through the National Credit Framework (NCRF), which enables students to earn credits from various experiences. By 2025, the NEP aims for at least 50% of students to undergo vocational education, enhancing employability and skills development across the nation.
- 5. Bridging Gender Gaps and Skill Development for an Automated Future:** Inclusive training should be prioritised for women and marginalised communities, particularly in the informal sector, to address gender disparities. Reskilling in digital, financial, and technical areas is essential for workforce preparation as industries are reshaped by automation and AI.
- 6. Fostering Entrepreneurship for Economic Growth:** Supporting entrepreneurship is vital for economic development and job creation in India. Startups and small businesses, particularly in technology and innovation, are key to this transformation. Creating robust ecosystems that offer mentorship, financial access, and necessary infrastructure is essential for empowering entrepreneurs and ensuring their success.
- 7. Enhancing Policy Frameworks for Skill Development:** Policy initiatives such as Skill India and the National Skill Development Mission are vital for tackling skill shortages. However, experts stress the importance of more agile policy implementation to align with the evolving

needs of emerging industries. Ensuring better alignment with global standards and industry-specific requirements is crucial for developing an effective skilled workforce.

- 8. Prioritising Mental Health in the Workplace:** The discussion underscored the critical importance of mental health in the workplace, as stress, burnout, and work-life imbalance can negatively impact productivity. Fostering a healthy work environment and providing mental health support is essential for enhancing employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall productivity.

Way Forward

- 1. Enhancing Inclusivity in Skilling Programs:** Targeted initiatives are essential to address the unique challenges faced by women and marginalised communities. Focusing on safety, infrastructure, and mobility—such as expanding training centres in rural areas and offering flexible learning formats—can create a more equitable environment for skill development.
- 2. Integrating Digital Literacy for an AI-Driven Future:** Educational institutions and training centres must prioritise digital literacy and AI-related skills in their curricula. Collaborating with tech companies to develop specialised courses can significantly enhance the preparedness of students and professionals for the evolving technological landscape.
- 3. Bridging Education and Industry Needs:** Strengthening partnerships between the private sector, government, and academic institutions is crucial. Co-created apprenticeship programmes, internships, and work-integrated learning initiatives can effectively align education with industry demands, equipping individuals with essential skills for workforce success.
- 4. Promoting Lifelong Learning through Vocational Education:** Expanding the reach of vocational education via platforms like the National Credit Framework (NCRF) is vital for enhancing employability, especially for individuals in the informal sector. Offering stackable credentials enables learners to accumulate skills throughout their careers and adapt to the evolving job market.
- 5. Supporting Entrepreneurship for Economic Growth:** Developing supportive policies and infrastructure, particularly in technology and innovation sectors, is essential to foster entrepreneurship. Providing funding, mentorship, and incubators for startups will create a conducive environment for job generation and overall economic development.
- 6. Enhancing Workplace Well-being:** Employers should focus on implementing mental health support systems, including stress management programmes and counselling services. Investing in employee well-being not only enhances productivity but also fosters a positive and inclusive workplace culture.