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Original Article

A Human Capital Imperative: Education, Skilling, and Employment for Viksit Bharat @ 2047

Dr. Anagha Baldota
Assistant Professor, DES' Shri Navalmal Firodia Law College, Pune

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Correspondence Address:
Dr. Anagha Baldota
Assistant Professor, DES' Shri Navalmal Firodia Law College, Pune
Email: Anaghajain.aj@gmail.com

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Abstract

The vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 transforming India into a developed nation by the centenary of its independence, is intrinsically linked to the optimal utilization of its demographic dividend. The present paper argues that the successful accomplishment of this vision hinges on a paradigm shift in human capital development, specifically through comprehensive reform in the education system, the expansion of the vocational wing, and aggressive upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Despite robust economic growth, India continues to grapple with the structural challenge of high youth unemployment and underemployment, primarily driven by a persistent skill-gap between academic output and industry demands. The paper also analyzes current policy initiatives, identifies critical challenges (including low formal vocational participation, quality control, and the absence of strong industry-academia linkages), and proposes a multi-pronged, decentralized, and technology driven framework to bridge this gap, thereby converting the demographic dividend into a sustainable economic asset and effectively curbing unemployment by 2047.

Keywords: *Skill India Mission, Vocational Wing and Apprenticeships, Decentralization and State Capacity*

Introduction

The Mandate of Viksit Bharat and the Demographic Dividend The journey towards Viksit Bharat @ 2047 requires not merely economic expansion but inclusive, sustainable, and technology-driven growth. A developed nation status is defined by high per capita income, robust infrastructure, and, crucially, a highly skilled, productive, and gainfully employed workforce. India, with approximately 65% of its population in the working-age group (15-64 years), possesses the world's largest demographic dividend a potential asset that can propel the nation into the league of developed economies. However, the potential of this dividend is threatened by a fundamental mismatch: a large youth population combined with low levels of formal skill training and employability. As of 2023, the formal vocational or technical training access for Indian youth remains below 5%, a stark contrast to the 60%–90% seen in developed economies. This significant gap is the root cause of the structural unemployment challenge, where graduates often lack the specific, contemporary skills required by the modern, rapidly evolving labor market. The achievement of the 2047 vision, therefore, necessitates an urgent and structural overhaul of the entire human capital ecosystem to foster an "Educated, Skilled, and Employable India."

Objective:

The Current Landscape: Gaps in Education and Vocational Training

A. The Traditional Education-Employability Disconnect

The Indian education system, historically focused on academic degrees and rote learning, often fails to cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving, and non-cognitive (soft) skills essential for the twenty-first-century workplace. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has attempted to address this by integrating vocational education from the school level, but implementation remains uneven.

1. Rote Learning Emphasis: The prevalent examination-centric culture prioritizes memorization over practical application, leading to a large pool of degree-holders who are technically 'educated' but lack 'employability.'

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2. Curriculum Obsolescence: Curricula in many higher education institutions lag significantly behind the rapid pace of technological change, particularly in emerging fields like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Green Energy.

B. The Challenge in Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Despite the launch of the Skill India Mission (SIM), the VET landscape is plagued by challenges that hinder its ability to effectively curb unemployment:

1. Social Stigma: Vocational training is often perceived as a fallback option for those who cannot pursue higher academic studies, reinforcing an institutional bias that devalues manual and technical skills. This contrasts sharply with developed nations where VET is a respected, direct pathway to high-paying jobs.
2. Quality and Relevance: A significant number of private-sector-led training institutions focus on meeting quantitative targets rather than qualitative outcomes. The lack of standardisation, poor infrastructure, and insufficiently trained instructors lead to certifications that are not recognized or valued by the industry.
3. Low Private Sector Engagement: The VET system suffers from limited sustained industry involvement in curriculum design, infrastructure investment, and apprenticeship provision. This results in training programs that are supply-driven rather than demand-aligned, exacerbating the skill-gap.

Data and Methodology

The "Viksit Bharat @ 2047" vision, which aims for a developed India by its 100th year of independence, relies heavily on improving human capital.[1] The data and methodology for this theme are consistently drawn from major official Indian and international sources and generally follow a mixed-methods research approach. Analysis on the human capital theme for Viksit Bharat @ 2047 primarily uses data from the following key sources:

1. Government of India and NITI Aayog

These are the most critical sources, providing current status, targets, and policy direction.

Data Source/Report	Key Indicators Covered
Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)	Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR), Unemployment Rate, Employment Status (Self-employed, Regular Wage/Salaried, Casual Labour), Sectoral Employment Share.
National Sample Survey (NSS) Education Surveys	Literacy Rates, Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) for various educational levels, Dropout Rates, Educational Attainment Levels.
All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)	Enrolment in Higher Education, Gender Parity Index (GPI), Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education, Institutional capacity.
NITI Aayog Documents and Working Papers	**Projected demographic shifts** (e.g., proportion of youth workforce), Targets for key sectors, Policy analysis and roadmaps.
Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) Data	Data on enrolment and certification under schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and **Skill Gap Analysis** across different sectors.
Economic Survey / Union Budget Documents	**Government expenditure** on education and health (as % of GDP/total expenditure), and **macro-economic projections** (e.g., projected Per Capita Income by 2047).

2. International and External Reports

These sources provide comparative data and external validation/benchmarks.

Data Source/Report	Key Indicators Covered
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	**Human Development Index (HDI)** ranking and components (Health, Education, Standard of Living).
World Bank / International Labour Organization (ILO)	Global comparisons, Youth Unemployment, Quality of Employment (e.g., informal vs. formal employment), and **economic growth projections**.
Global Reports (e.g., Global Gender Gap Report)	Gender-specific metrics, particularly women's participation in the economy (**Narishakti**).

Methodology of Analysis

The overarching methodology employed in analyses for the Viksit Bharat @ 2047 human capital goal is a **Mixed-Methods Research Design** that blends current status analysis, future projections, and gap identification.

1. Quantitative Analysis: Establishing the Baseline and Projecting the Future

The quantitative approach involves statistical analysis of the secondary data from the sources listed above.

Baseline Analysis: This step involves analyzing time-series data (e.g., PLFS from 2000 to present) to understand **current trends** in education, skilling, and employment. Key metrics include:

- Calculating **LFPR and WPR** for different age groups, genders, and social strata.
- Analyzing **sectoral distribution of employment** and the rate of shift from agriculture to manufacturing and services.

- Determining the prevalence of **informal employment** and **casual work**.

- **Gap Analysis and Target Setting:** The current status (baseline data) is compared with the **Viksit Bharat @ 2047 targets**. For example:
- *Current Literacy Rate (approx. 77.7%)* vs. *2047 Target (Universal Education).*
- *Current HDI Rank (approx. 134)* vs. *2047 Goal (Developed Nation Status).*
- *Current share of formal employment* vs. *2047 goal of high-quality, meaningful employment.*
- The difference between the current status and the target defines the **"gap"** that policy interventions must address.

- **Economic Modelling and Projections:** Econometric and demographic models are used to forecast the required trajectory.
- **Demographic Projections:** Forecasting the size and age structure of the working-age population by 2047.
- **Growth Projections:** Linking required human capital investment to achieving a target GDP size (e.g., $30 Trillion economy) and per capita income (e.g., $21,000).

2. Qualitative Analysis: Policy and Strategy Formulation

The qualitative component focuses on reviewing existing frameworks, identifying systemic challenges, and formulating strategic recommendations.

- **Review of Policies:** In-depth analysis of government documents and reports, including the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and existing skill development missions, to understand their strategic goals and implementation challenges.

- **Thematic Deep Dives:** Structured analysis of key policy themes:
- **Curriculum & Pedagogy:** Analyzing the shift towards **competency-based assessment** and **skill integration** from school level (as per NEP).
- **Skilling Ecosystem:** Reviewing the effectiveness of the **dual educator model**, **industry-academia collaboration**, and the role of ITIs/Polytechnics.
- **Employment Quality:** Studying factors that perpetuate **brain drain**, youth unemployment, and the low quality of jobs, particularly for women.

- **Stakeholder Consultation (Implied):** The foundation of the Viksit Bharat vision often involves **Round Table discussions** and feedback loops with academia, industry, civil society, and government departments to ensure policy relevance and implementability.

Result & Discussion

Strategic Pillars for Skilling India towards 2047

Achieving the Viksit Bharat goal requires a cohesive, three-pronged strategy focused on education, vocational expansion, and continuous upskilling, supported by systemic reforms to improve governance and finance.

A. Reforming the Core Education System

The foundation of a skilled workforce must be laid at the school and university level.

1. Integration of Vocational and General Education: Full and effective implementation of NEP 2020 is crucial. Vocational streams must be fully integrated with mainstream education, allowing for multiple entry and exit points and ensuring that vocational training carries the same academic equivalence and social respect as an academic degree. The focus should shift from a strict separation to a seamless transition between the two.
2. Focus on Foundational Skills: Curriculum reform must prioritize digital literacy, financial literacy, and essential soft skills (communication, teamwork, and entrepreneurial thinking) across all educational levels. These foundational skills are prerequisite for success in the emerging gig and digital economy.
3. Strengthening Teacher Training: Teacher training institutes must be revamped to equip educators with the skills to deliver experiential and project-based learning. Teachers must be trained to integrate technology and industry-relevant case studies into their lessons, moving away from the traditional lecture-based model.

B. Elevating the Vocational Wing and Apprenticeships

The vocational ecosystem must be transformed from a set of fragmented schemes into a robust, formalized, and demand-driven system.

1. The Apprenticeship Mandate: An aggressive national policy is required to mandate greater private sector participation in apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeships must be viewed not as a liability but as a principal mechanism for talent acquisition and in-house skill development. Expanding the scope and stipend under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) is essential.
2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at Scale: The large informal sector workforce possesses valuable skills that lack formal certification, limiting their mobility and bargaining power. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism must be scaled up drastically to certify millions of workers, providing them with credentials that enhance their wage potential and access to formal employment.
3. Leveraging Technology for Quality: A centralized, AI-powered National Skills Registry can track the demand for specific job roles across industries and geographies, dynamically informing curriculum design at Industrial Training Institutes (it is) and VET centers. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies should be deployed for practical training simulations, ensuring high-quality, and standardized instruction even in remote areas.

C. Addressing the Future of Work: Upskilling and Reskilling

The rapid pace of technological disruption, particularly automation and AI, means that the skills acquired today will be obsolete tomorrow. Curbing unemployment by 2047 requires a commitment to lifelong learning.

1. Digital Reskilling for the Existing Workforce: Targeted, subsidized programs for the existing workforce in sectors highly susceptible to automation (e.g., banking, data entry, and manufacturing) are necessary. This includes mass upskilling in data analytics, cloud computing, and basic coding.
2. The Gig Economy and Entrepreneurship: Policy must facilitate the growth of the gig economy by providing adequate social security, skill certification, and easy access to micro-finance. Promoting entrepreneurship through mentorship, easier compliance rules for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and seed funding will convert a significant number of job-seekers into job-creators.
3. Focus on Green and Care Economies: As a developed nation, India must lead in sustainability. Mass training in emerging Green Skills (e.g., renewable energy installation, waste management, environmental auditing) and the Care Economy (e.g., specialized healthcare, elderly care, and early childhood education) will open up vast new, sustainable, and labor-intensive employment avenues.

Institutional and Financial Frameworks

The success of these strategies depends on establishing robust governance and financing mechanisms.

A. Decentralization and State Capacity

Unemployment is a geographically and culturally varied challenge. A "One-Size-Fits-All" central approach is ineffective. The VET ecosystem must be decentralized, giving greater autonomy to State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs) to tailor training programs to local industrial clusters and regional needs. State governments should be incentivized to focus on strengthening the fundamentals of growth, including health and education infrastructure, particularly in less developed regions.

Financing Skill Development

1. Financing skill development requires innovative models beyond central government grants.
2. Industry-Led Training Levy: Implementing a national training levy on all large organized-sector firms, with the provision that companies can deduct the amount spent on in-house certified training programs, can encourage private sector investment while generating a fund for skilling the informal workforce.
3. Outcome-Based Funding: VET funding should increasingly shift towards outcome-based models, where payment to training partners is strictly linked to employment placement rates, retention periods, and higher average wages of the trainees.
4. C. Bridging the Formal-Informal Divide
5. Simplifying compliance and labor regulations is critical to incentivize firms to shift from the informal to the formal sector, where job stability and employee training are institutionalized. Efforts to cut regulatory burden and simplify the complex web of labor laws will drive private sector confidence and encourage investment in job-rich sectors like agro-processing and labor-intensive manufacturing.

Conclusion: Towards a Future-Ready Workforce

The path to Viksit Bharat @ 2047 is paved with investment in its people. Curbing the evil of unemployment is not merely an economic Imperative but a social and political necessity for ensuring inclusive development. The current structural unemployment is a reflection of the mismatch between a large, young population and an inadequately prepared human capital ecosystem.

The comprehensive solution requires a National Human Capital Strategy that structurally links the reformed school and higher education system with a revitalized, technology-driven vocational wing. By effectively implementing the vision of NEP 2020, mandating industry involvement in apprenticeships, mass upskilling in future-ready domains (like AI and Green Skills), and decentralizing policy implementation, India can transform its demographic challenge into its greatest asset. Success in this domain will not only lead to a developed economy by 2047 but will also ensure that every Indian citizen is empowered with the skills necessary to participate meaningfully in the nation's prosperity.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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