

Skilling India's Workforce for the Future: A Study of Higher Education, Employability, and Industry Alignment

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Abstract: *The global landscape of management education is undergoing a paradigm shift. Traditional MBA programs - once considered gold standards for preparing future business leaders—are now facing significant scrutiny for their ability to stay relevant amid rapid technological change, evolving industry demands, and the need for more dynamic leadership capabilities (Zeidan & Bishnoi, 2020). With the rise of Industry 4.0, digital transformation, and sustainable innovation, there is a growing need for educational ecosystems that are agile, practice-oriented, and deeply integrated with industry realities (Esangbedo et al., 2024). India's current approach to skill development is comprehensive, encompassing both the skilling of new entrants into the labor market and the up-skilling and reskilling of the existing workforce to meet evolving industry benchmarks. The National Skill Development Mission has set an ambitious target of skilling 403 million individuals by 2022. As the fastest-growing service economy, with services contributing approximately 61% to national GDP, India is witnessing rapid expansion in sectors such as Information Technology–Business Process Management (IT-BPM), healthcare, tourism, and emerging technologies. However, despite a robust demand for labor both domestically and internationally, a significant gap persists in the employability of Indian youth. Notably, this gap is prevalent not only among the uneducated and untrained, but also among educated individuals, whose skills often fall short of industry requirements. This study explores the evolving landscape of India's higher education system in the context of labor market dynamics, skill demands, and the employability index across high-growth sectors. The study highlights the strategic value of embedding structured, long-term partnerships between industry and academia to foster innovation, skill alignment, and graduate employability. These insights provide actionable recommendations for business schools, policy-makers, and corporate stakeholders aiming to co-create impactful management education ecosystems. By analysing the education profiles of jobseekers and existing skill gaps, the paper proposes strategic interventions to enhance workforce readiness. The findings aim to inform policy and institutional frameworks that can better integrate education and skills development, ensuring alignment with national and global economic needs.*

Keywords: Skill Development, Employability, Workforce Reskilling, Ordinal Logistic Regression

