



# International Journal of Innovative Research in Science Engineering and Technology (IJIRSET)

*(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)*



**Impact Factor: 8.699**

**Volume 14, Issue 6, June 2025**

# Harnessing Human Capital: India's Strategic Move toward Global Skill Leadership

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**ABSTRACT:** In recent years, India has embarked on an ambitious path to transform itself into a global hub for skilled manpower. From large-scale government programs to public-private partnerships and international collaborations, India's moves toward global skill leadership are shaping its economic future and its role in the global labor market. India's youthful population offers a distinct advantage over aging societies in the West and East Asia. This paper focuses on the strategic skill development initiatives to positioning the India in the world human capital and as hub of skill talent. It examines key policy frameworks such as Skill India, National Education Policy 2020, and public-private partnerships that are designed to up skill the workforce and align it with international labor market demands. To analyze the role of public-private partnerships in bridging skill gaps. It also India's international collaborations and their role in global skill mobility and to identify challenges and recommend policy measures for India's skill leadership strategy.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

India, with its rapidly growing working-age population, is uniquely positioned to become the global hub for skilled labor. As aging economies face workforce shortages, India's youthful demographic represents an unparalleled opportunity. However, transforming this potential into economic and global strategic advantage requires robust policies, training ecosystems, and global alignment of skill standards. This research will explore how India is strategically harnessing its human capital to position itself as a global leader in skill development. India, home to over 1.4 billion people, is poised at a crucial juncture in its developmental journey. With more than 65% of its population under the age of 35, India stands on the threshold of a demographic dividend that could fuel economic growth for decades. However, reaping this dividend requires more than just favorable demographics — it demands a strategic and sustained focus on harnessing human capital. In recent years, India has embarked on an ambitious path to transform itself into a global hub for skilled manpower. From large-scale government programs to public-private partnerships and international collaborations, India's moves toward global skill leadership are shaping its economic future and its role in the global labor market. India's youthful population offers a distinct advantage over aging societies in the West and East Asia. While countries like Japan, China, and much of Europe grapple with shrinking workforces, India is expected to add over 183 million people to the working-age group (15–64 years) by 2050. This demographic potential could make India the world's largest supplier of skilled labor, provided it is backed by the right policy framework, infrastructure, and investment in education and vocational training.

## II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite a favorable demographic dividend, India continues to face a paradox of "skills without jobs" and "jobs without skills." There exists a persistent gap between education, skill training, and employability. The present paper seeks to analyze India's skill development initiatives and its impact on skill development to assess how these efforts align with global labor market needs.

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To evaluate the major skill development initiatives undertaken by India over the last decade.
- ❖ To analyze the role of public-private partnerships in bridging skill gaps.
- ❖ To assess India's international collaborations and their role in global skill mobility.
- ❖ To identify challenges and recommend policy measures for India's skill leadership strategy.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive in nature based on evaluation of the Indian strategy towards global skill leadership of India, Content analysis of government policy documents, skill development reports, and international agreements. This study is based on secondary data collected from various journals, magazines, periodicals etc.,

## V. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

**5.1 Government Initiatives: Laying the Foundation**

The digital transformation of India's economy has increased the demand for new-age skills such as AI, machine learning, cyber security, data analytics, and cloud computing. Recognizing this, the government and private sector have launched re-skilling and up skilling platforms.

**1. Skill India Mission (SIM)**

This scheme is intended to train over 400 million Indians in market-relevant skills by 2022 Includes short-term skill training, up skilling, re skilling, and certification. Associated with other sub schemes Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Skill Loan Scheme

**2. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** PMKVY 1.0 (2015), 2.0 (2016–20), 3.0, intended to Free short-term training programs aligned with industry needs. Focus on industry-recognized certification and placement support. This yojana is to impart training to Over 1.4 crore individuals.

**3. National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC):** under Public-Private Partnership with Funds and enables private training providers. NSDC develops Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) to ensure industry alignment and manages digital skilling platforms like eSkill India and Skill India Digital.

**4. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Integrating vocational education with mainstream education with vocational exposure from Grade 6 onwards. It also emphasizes on skill-based learning, internships, and flexibility in curriculum. This policy is intended to reach 50% of learners to have vocational exposure by 2025.

**5. SANKALP (Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion)**

Funded by World Bank with an objective to Strengthen institutional mechanisms at national and state levels for skill development, focusing the areas of Quality assurance of training centers, Decentralized skill planning, Skilling of marginalized populations (women, SC/ST)

**6. STRIVE (Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement):** is intended to

Improve the performance of ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes) with the features to Modernizing ITIs with industry linkages, Enhancing apprenticeship training, and promoting women participation in technical education.

**7. Skill India International Centers (SIICs)** with the goal to Prepare Indian youth for global employment markets undertaking the activities to Pre-departure training (language, cultural orientation, technical skills) and to Alignment with global certification standards (e.g., GCC, EU) in specific centre such as Locations: Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Kochi, among others

**8. Apprenticeship Promotion Schemes:** there are two schemes such as A. National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) to provide Financial incentives to industries to promote apprenticeship training for MSMEs and informal sectors. B. National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) Focuses on engineering and diploma graduates and Provides practical training to improve employability.

**9. Future Skills PRIME:** NASSCOM and MeitY launched this programmes to focus emerging technologies (AI, ML, cyber security, cloud, etc.) for the purpose of the deskilling/up skilling platform for IT professionals and graduates to create a future-ready digital workforce aligned with global demands



**10. India Skills Competitions & World Skills Participation:** National-level competitions initiation to identify and promote skill excellence and Winners represent India in World Skills International, enhancing global brand value of Indian talent

**11. Atmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping (ASEEM) Portal** is a AI-based platform to map skilled candidates with job opportunities and to Bridges supply-demand gaps at the regional and sectoral levels

**12. Digital Initiatives:** a. eSkill India Platform offers 1,000+ online courses in multiple languages and Includes partnerships with global platforms like Coursera, edX

b. **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH):** National digital ecosystem to integrate training, certification, and job placement

### 5.2 The role of public-private partnerships in bridging skill gaps.

The Engine of Innovation India's private sector plays a crucial role in skill development. Companies are investing in training academies, apprenticeships, and on-the-job learning: Tata STRIVE, L&T Construction Skills Training Institutes, and Infosys Campus Connect are examples of how corporate are shaping workforce readiness. Startups like Scalar, Up Grad, and Simplearn are addressing the digital skill gap and providing scalable online education. These collaborations ensure that the curriculum remains aligned with current market demands and helps bridge the employability gap.

### 5.3 India's international collaborations and their role in global skill mobility.

#### International Collaboration Initiatives

India has been proactively forging global partnerships to align its skill development efforts with international standards. These collaborations aim to enhance global employability of Indian workers, facilitate mutual recognition of skills, and ensure India becomes a key contributor to the global talent supply chain. India's skilled workforce is already contributing significantly to global markets, particularly in IT, healthcare, engineering, and construction.

#### 1. India-UAE Skill Partnership

A landmark agreement signed in 2022 focused on mutual recognition of skill qualifications to standardize skill frameworks and boost workforce mobility between the two countries. Establishment of a Skill India International Centre in Varanasi to train youth for overseas employment, especially in GCC countries and also facilitates job placements for certified Indian workers in sectors like construction, hospitality, and health care.

#### 2. India-Japan Technical Intern Training Program (TITP)

This is an agreement under which Indian youth receive on-the-job training in Japan. To transfer skills and technology back to India while providing Japanese industries with trained interns. This programme is Implemented through accredited sending organizations (NSDC is a nodal agency). this promotes cross-border learning and builds a globally competitive Indian workforce.

#### 3. India-Germany Migration and Mobility Partnership

Signed in 2022, this agreement promotes academic exchange and professional mobility. This partnership to streamline migration for Indian students, researchers, and skilled workers. This Includes provisions for recognition of qualifications and fast-track visa processing and facilitates access to European job markets, especially in STEM fields and vocational trades.

#### 4. Australia-India Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMPA)

Announced as part of the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (AI-ECTA). Intended to enhance two-way mobility of students, graduates, academics, and professionals Includes a Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme (MATES) for Indian graduates and enhances skill portability and global employability for Indian youth in high-demand sectors.

#### 5. UK-India Enhanced Trade Partnership & Skills Cooperation

The UK and India have agreed to collaborate on skill development under the Enhanced Trade Partnership. To promote mutual recognition of qualifications and enhance skill transfer. These Partnerships between Indian training institutions

and UK awarding bodies for the purpose of improving the international credibility of Indian certifications, opening up job opportunities in the UK.

#### 6. Indo-Singapore Skill Development Collaboration

India and Singapore have partnered to establish skill development centers and train Indian workers to global standards. This Skill Centre for Excellence in Assam and the India-Singapore Institute of Skills (ISIOS) in Delhi to Provides industry-relevant skills to Indian youth based on Singaporean models.

#### 7. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Engagements:

India has ongoing dialogues with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman for structured labor mobility. Use of Skill Verification Programs to validate Indian certifications in GCC countries. Reduces exploitation, increases wages, and ensures Indian workers are matched to skilled jobs.

#### 8. International Skill Hubs

NSDC International has initiated the development of Skill India International Hubs to train Indian youth for overseas employment. Particularly in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat and to Prepare Indian workers according to the language, technical, and cultural standards of destination countries.

**9. International Workforce Mobility Partnerships:** India is negotiating with several countries to facilitate easier movement of skilled professionals, especially in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia-Pacific regions.

#### 5.4 Role of technology in making India a skill capital of the world

India's strategic move toward global skill leadership is deeply intertwined with its ability to harness human capital through the intelligent use of technology. As one of the youngest nations in terms of workforce demographics, India has an immense pool of human potential—but unlocking that potential requires systems that are scalable, inclusive, and forward-looking.

#### 1. Digital Platforms for Skill Development

India has launched large-scale digital platforms to democratize access to skill training:

**Skill India Mission & PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana):** These use tech to standardize and deliver training to millions.

**SWAYAM & DIKSHA:** MOOC platforms that provide online learning modules in regional languages, enabling flexible, self-paced learning.

**ESkills India:** Offers AI, block chain, cloud, and other future skills training in collaboration with global ed-tech companies.

#### 2. AI, ML, and Data Analytics for Personalized Learning

Ed-tech platforms like BYJU'S, Up Grad, and Un academy use AI-driven personalization to tailor content based on the learner's pace, preferences, and strengths.

Data analytics is used by institutions to monitor student engagement, outcomes, and employability trends, informing better policy decisions.

#### 3. Industry 4.0 Integration

To prepare a future-ready workforce, Indian skilling ecosystems are integrating technologies such as IoT, robotics, AR/VR in vocational training (especially in manufacturing, automotive, and healthcare sectors). Simulations and virtual labs are used to teach hands-on skills remotely, especially valuable in rural or under-resourced areas.

#### 4. Tech-Driven Assessment and Certification

Platforms like NSDC and Skill India Digital Hub use online assessments, remote proctoring, and block chain-based credentialing to ensure transparent, scalable, and verifiable skill certification. These digital certificates are increasingly recognized globally, enhancing international mobility and employability of Indian talent.

**5. Bridging Urban-Rural Skill Divide**

Mobile apps, vernacular content, and AI chat bots help reach learners in Tier 2/3 cities and rural areas. Internet and mobile penetration, combined with low-cost devices, have transformed rural youth's access to opportunities.

**6. Connecting Skills to Global Job Markets**

Portals like India International Skill Centre (IISC) and Skill India International use AI-matching tools to connect trained Indian youth with overseas employers.

Block chain and cloud-based documentation systems streamline credential verification for foreign employment.

**7. Public-Private Partnerships & Start-up Ecosystem**

India's ed-tech and HR-tech startups are rapidly innovating—leveraging technology to bridge gaps in employability, corporate up skilling, and talent discovery. Strategic partnerships with companies like Google, Microsoft, AWS, and Coursera amplify the reach and relevance of skill development programs.

**5.5 Challenges and road ahead policy measures for India's skill leadership strategy.**

Despite the progress in skill development policies and strategies and government initiatives challenges remain:

**Mismatch of Skills:** Often, training does not align with industry demand, leading to a paradox of unemployed skilled youth.

**Urban-Rural Divide:** Skill development infrastructure is often concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural populations underserved.

**Quality Control:** The rapid proliferation of training centers has led to inconsistency in the quality of education and certification.

**Cultural Perceptions:** Social bias still favors traditional degrees over vocational training, limiting the popularity of skill-based education.

**VI. POLICY MEASURES FOR SKILL LEADERSHIP STRATEGY**

The following policies are critical to position India as a global skill leader, and skill capital of world.

1. Curriculum Standardization and Global Benchmarking: Align Indian training standards with global qualifications frameworks.
2. Focus on Soft Skills and Multilingual Training: In an interconnected world, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability are as important as technical skills.
3. Decentralized Delivery: Leverage digital infrastructure to bring quality training to rural and semi-urban populations.
4. Stronger Industry-Academia Linkages: Encourage co-creation of content, internships, and apprenticeships to enhance employability.
5. Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms: Establish outcome-based metrics to track the efficacy of skill programs.

**VII. CONCLUSION**

India stands at the cusp of becoming the world's skill capital. By harnessing its demographic advantage, leveraging technology, and fostering international collaborations, India is carving a unique niche as a global talent powerhouse. While the journey is complex, the vision is clear: to transform human capital into a strategic asset that not only drives domestic growth but also meets the global economy's evolving needs. With continued commitment, India's move toward global skill leadership could be its most transformative endeavor of the 21st century.

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