

Remodeling the Landscape of Education & Skill Development towards creating Viksit Bharat through India Inc.

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ABSTRACT:

In 2047, India will celebrate its centenary year as India@100, marking the post-independence era. Hence, the Government of India aims to make the nation a 'Viksit Bharat', a fully developed India by that time. To achieve this status, India is taking concrete and progressive steps towards the holistic development of the country, resulting in inclusive growth. However, the 'India – Bharat' divide persists despite of 77th year of Independence. One of the major areas where a more focused approach and interventions are required revolves around youth and their education and skill development, as in India, approximately 65% of its population is under the age of thirty-five, which makes it the largest young population globally. The realisation of 'Viksit Bharat' is contingent upon the successful empowerment of women. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UNSDG-4) on Quality Education also focuses on improving the percentage of people with relevant skills, comprising vocational and technical skills, for employment, entrepreneurship, and decent jobs. It also calls for the full participation of women and men for equal opportunities for education and skill building.

Skill development is imperative for the young adults as it equips them with industry-relevant experience along with practical learning making them more employable in the progressively changing job market. With the growing industry demands, advancements in technology, the conventional education system alone is insufficient to bridge the skill gap between theoretical learning and real-world practical requirements. The skill-building process also enables youth to create their own opportunities through entrepreneurship and contribute to financial growth and stability. The focus on skill development may take the nation to a different level by reducing unemployment and building an inclusive country where young people from the marginalised

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communities may observe economic upliftment, leading to the holistic development of the society.

As the need for the skilled workforce continues to increase for improving the economic growth, this study is imperative for exploring the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, which may act as a catalyst for enhancing the sustenance and support of the government's skill development agenda. To address this, this research wishes to study the impact of CSR programmes in bridging the skill gaps in India and acting as a driver for the Skill India Mission.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Education, Skill Development, UNSDG-4, Viksit Bharat, Community Development

1. Introduction

In the present scenario, India is ranking below average on comparing with other countries in the various areas of development index comprising of the major deficit in terms of skill development initiatives. This paper dwells deep into studying and analysing the role of CSR initiatives as catalyst in transforming India through skill building of youths. The secondary data in the form of research papers, case studies representing best practices, policy documents, reports and surveys done by Government and other development indexes and national & international voluntary organisations forms the base of the study. Through systematic theme-based analyses, the paper carefully examines skill development initiatives in India, various indicators and models emphasising the significance of CSR in fostering sustainable development.

This paper also highlights the need to create clear Key Performance Indicators and matrices for the ongoing initiatives and programmed for women empowerment and how CSR can play an enabling role in bringing a paradigm shift and bridging this wide and deep divide at the backdrop of the critical need of re-assessing and modifying programmes to achieve SDG-5 by 2030. Henceforth, this paper also allows for an exploration of several key indicators & aspects for achieving and contributing towards the agenda and vision of 'Viksit Bharat', encompassing;

Education directly influences employment, making it essential to develop core skills that help close the existing skill gap. Based on the India Employment Report 2024: Youth Employment, Education, and Skills, a detailed study conducted jointly the International Labour Organization (ILO) and by the Institute for Human Development (IHD), India's youth make up a staggering 83% of the unemployed people in India. The report showcases an alarming trend: the proportion of educated youth among the unemployed has witnessed an increase, from 54% in the year 2000 to 66% in 2022. This data underscores the growing challenge of educated

unemployment, signalling a demand for enhanced job creation strategies, skill building programs, and industry-academia partnership to bridge the gap between the education system and employability.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) 2016 report, titled *The Future of Jobs*, provides a clear forecast for the economic growth of India, identifying the country's youth and expansive workforce as a vital asset. The suggestions from the report highlight that India is aspiring to be the 3rd largest economy by 2030, if it effectively trains and utilises its workforce. The nation would need to create around 100 million new job opportunities over the next ten years to address the needs of the young population entering the workforce.

Moreover, the World Economic Forum report highlights the tremendous potential within India's education and skill training ecosystem. Strengthening vocational training and education, developing industry partnerships, and implementing innovative workforce training programmes will be crucial in ensuring that young professionals are equipped with the required skillsets to thrive in an evolving and dynamic job market. By leveraging opportunities in emerging markets and addressing these structural challenges, India can carve out its own path to sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

2. Review of Literature

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives have gained significant attention in recent years, as corporations recognise their responsibility to contribute positively to the environment and society. In India, the scope of CSR is dealt under Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013 with Schedule VII and Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility policy) Rules 2014.

It states that any company having Net profit of INR 5 Crores or higher, or a Net worth of INR 500 Crores or higher or a Turnover of INR 1000 Crores or higher, needs to spend two % of its profit (after paying tax) in CSR activities listed in the Companies Act under Schedule VII and needs to report it at the CSR portal of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs

According to Schedule VII, "the initiative or activities that could be included and implemented by companies in their CSR Policies relate to:

- (i) eradication of hunger, poverty and malnutrition, promoting health care including preventive health care and promotion of sanitation and safe drinking water;
- (ii) promotion of education, including special education and employment enhancing vocation skills especially among the diverse groups like children, women, elderly and the specially abled and enhancement of livelihood projects;
- (iii) promotion of gender equality, empowering women, setting up homes and hostels for women and orphans; setting up old age homes, day

- care centres and such other facilities for senior citizens and measures for reducing inequalities faced by socially and economically backward groups;
- (iv) ensuring sustainability of the environment, ecological balance, conservation of flora and fauna, animal welfare, agro-forestry, protection of natural resources and quality of soil, air and water including contribution for cleaning and rejuvenation of river Ganga;
 - (v) protecting the National Heritage, art and culture, including restoration of buildings and sites of historical importance and works of art; setting up public libraries; conservation and promotion of traditional artwork and handicrafts;
 - (vi) measure for the benefit of armed force veterans, war widows and their dependents, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and Central Para Military Forces (CPMF) veterans, and their dependents, including widows;
 - (vii) training to promote rural sports, nationally recognised sports, Paralympic sports and Olympic sports;
 - (viii) contribution to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund or Prime Minister's Central Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) or any other fund set up by the Central Government for socio-economic development and relief and welfare of the Scheduled Castes, the Schedule Tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women;
 - (ix) (a) Contribution to incubators or research and development projects in the field of science, technology, engineering and medicine, funded by the Central Government or State Government or Public Sector Undertaking or any agency of the Central Government or State Government; and
 (b) Contributions to public funded Universities; engaged in conducting research in science, technology, engineering and medicine aimed at promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - (xi) development of slums
 - (xii) disaster relief, management and rehabilitation".

The report of National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 2011-12 (68th round) on the Educational and Vocational Training status in India highlights substantial gaps in vocational skill development among individuals aged 15-59 years, revealing that "only 2.2% of this demographic reported receiving formal vocational training, while 8.6% had undergone non-formal vocational training". These figures highlight the challenges faced by India's workforce in acquiring industry-relevant skills, which are essential for securing

employment opportunities in an increasingly competitive job market. In this scenario, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives play a crucial role in connecting the dots and bridging the skill gap by complementing the Government of India's Skill India Mission. Many corporates are now contributing to skill-building initiatives, vocational training courses, and industry-specific skilling programs to make the youth industry-ready—especially from economically disadvantaged sections—with technical, soft, financial, digital, and entrepreneurial skills that align with market needs. CSR initiatives, in partnership with the Government and academia, play a significant and transformative role in improving employability, economic development, and generating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives have the power to make a real difference in strengthening India's vocational training ecosystem. By combining corporate expertise, financial resources, and technology-led innovations, CSR initiatives can play a catalytic role in preparing a skilled, future-ready workforce. These efforts not only align with India's vision of becoming a global talent hub but also open new pathways for youth empowerment, community growth, and overall socioeconomic progress. A closer look at such contributions reveals how public-private partnerships and corporate engagement can accelerate the nation's skill development journey.

Key Government Initiatives

In recent years, the Government of India has launched many flagship programs for the advancement of education and skill development. Some of the important ones include:

Education Initiatives

- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):** focuses on ensuring equal access to quality education, improving learning outcomes from pre-school to higher secondary.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** A ground-breaking reform that aims to provide holistic, flexible and multi-disciplinary education, designed to prepare students for 21st-century challenges.
- **Digital India Campaign:** emphasis on bridging the digital gap and divide by promoting digital learning and tech-enabled education across the nation.

Skill Development Initiatives

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** Provides industry-relevant skill training to young people, equipping them with

employability skills.

- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY):** aims at youth from rural areas - by offering sustainable livelihood opportunities through vocational training.
- **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS):** Encourages industries to on-board apprentices by offering financial support and structured training opportunities.
- **Pradhan Mantri Internship Scheme (PMIS):** Seeks to train youths on hands-on workplace exposure within top 500 companies over the next five years, offering 12 months of practical training across diverse sectors and professions.

These initiatives are part of a broader effort to bridge the gap between education and employment, ensuring that students and workforce are equipped with the skills needed for the future. With the growing need for a skilled workforce to drive economic growth, this research holds significant importance in understanding how the private sector, through its CSR activities, can complement the government's efforts in skill development.

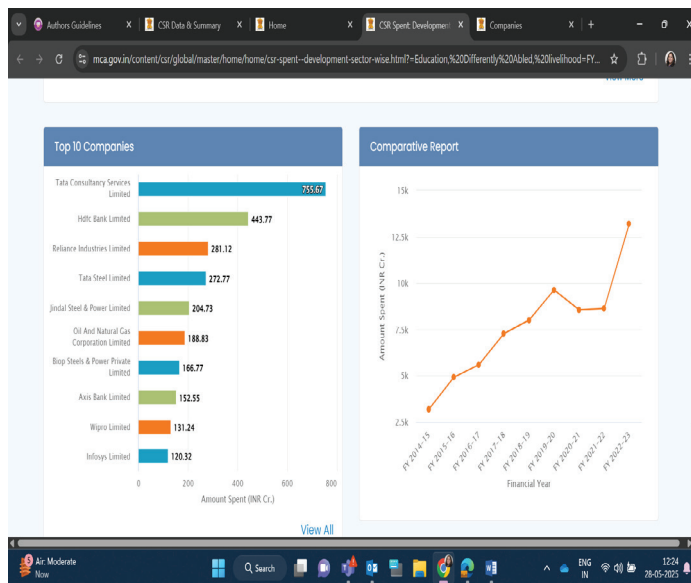
In recent years, CSR initiatives have assumed increasing significance as businesses acknowledge their responsibility to contribute to social and environmental well-being alongside economic growth. In India, the scope and regulatory framework for CSR are clearly defined under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, along with Schedule VII, which specifies permissible activities. Among these, education and skill development hold a central position, with Schedule VII (ii) explicitly including the promotion of education, ranging from mainstream and special education to vocational skills, livelihood enhancement, and targeted interventions for children, women, the elderly and especially the abled.

This study examines the impact of CSR initiatives on India's education ecosystem. It aims to explore how corporate-led interventions are not only supplementing but also transforming the education and skills landscape, particularly in alignment with national development priorities. Over time, CSR has evolved beyond the realm of charity and philanthropy, moving towards sustainable, inclusive interventions closely aligned with developmental outcomes. By forging collaborations with educational institutions and implementing targeted, on-the-ground programs, corporates have contributed significantly to enhancing access to quality education, strengthening infrastructure, fostering teacher training, and reaching last-mile beneficiaries in underserved regions.

A noteworthy dimension of CSR's impact in education in India is the growing partnership between corporates and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These collaborations have enabled the design

and execution of vocational training initiatives and life skills programs, equipping students with employability skills and fostering pathways towards economic independence. Such interventions are particularly significant in the context of India's workforce requirements, given the rising demand for skilled labour as a driver of sustained economic growth.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to contribute to the discourse by examining the efficacy and evolving role of CSR in supporting education and vocational training, especially in relation to the Skill India Mission. It argues that beyond fulfilling legal compliance, CSR has emerged as an important mechanism that complements government efforts to bridge the skills gap and foster inclusive human capital development.



Data Source: Dynamic CSR Report (mca.gov.in)

Objectives

The key objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To study the current landscape of CSR programmes in education and skill development in India, finding major areas of focus and impactful CSR initiatives on skill development.
2. To analyse the effectiveness of CSR programs in supporting the objectives of the Skill India Mission, particularly in addressing the skill gaps among marginalised and underprivileged communities.
3. To assess the potential of CSR initiatives in enhancing industry-relevant workforce skills, thereby contributing to the creation of a competitive, inclusive, and innovation-driven economy.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how CSR initiatives can play a transformative role in enhancing India's education system and skill development landscape.

4. Methodology:

This study employs a descriptive research approach, utilising the case study method. Since the research primarily relies on secondary sources, data is collected from various documents, reports and published studies that analyse the effectiveness and challenges of these initiatives. The main sources include official government policies, corporate CSR reports, skill gap surveys, and academic literature, providing insights into how businesses and state programs contribute to educational accessibility and workforce training. Through this approach, the study seeks to highlight trends, policy effectiveness and implementation challenges that shape India's education and skill development landscape.

To conduct an in-depth analysis, the study examines data across three core dimensions: implementation challenges, impact assessment of CSR and government skill-building programs and policy effectiveness. By synthesising data from existing reports and research papers, the study identifies how collaborations between corporations and public institutions influence literacy rates, employability, and vocational skill development. Additionally, it critically evaluates disparities in resource allocation, scalability concerns, and gaps in monitoring mechanisms, helping to frame recommendations for more sustainable and impactful interventions. This structured methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of the evolving role of CSR and government efforts in strengthening India's educational and employment sectors.

Impactful CSR Initiatives

This paper showcases a few of the impactful CSR initiatives and successful case studies and programs in the area of Education and Skill Development for learning real-life skills, focusing on the marginalised Communities, creating a benchmark for the whole Industry.

- I. **HDFC Bank's** Holistic Rural Development program focuses on empowering women and youth, promoting local employment opportunities.

Impact: Through its CSR programme, more than 3 lakhs youths and more than 8.75 lakhs women from the marginalised section of the society were trained to gain employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

- II. **Tata Trust's** Collectives for Integrated Livelihood Initiatives (CInI) focuses on improving lives of the tribal communities in through education and skill development programs. The initiative blends traditional learning with practical experiences to empower students.

Impact: This initiative is implemented in 22 states so far, starting from the year 2024, enabling jobs to more than 27000 youths and currently enhancing the employability of more than 16000 trainees

- III. **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** iON Platform is offering online courses to enhance education and skill development, especially in remote areas.

Impact: The platform provides accessible education to more than 1 million youths, bridging the gap between traditional educational infrastructure and modern learning needs

- IV. **Reliance Foundation** has established vocational training centres to empower rural youth with skills in agriculture, healthcare, and retail.

Impact: These centers align training with local economic needs, fostering sustainable development and employability and have trained more than 6 Lakhs youths,

- V. **Tech Mahindra Foundation's** SMART Program focuses on sectors like IT/ITeS, retail, and hospitality, addressing specific skill gaps in different regions.

Impact: The program enhances employability by providing comprehensive training to more than 1.5 Lakhs youth and is tailored to regional needs across the country.

4. Results and Findings

In summary, the research results indicate that well-designed CSR initiatives in education & skill development can have a significant positive impact on BoP communities and complement existing Government initiatives by working within the 4Ps (Public-Private-People Partnership), creating impactful and sustainable social change.

To enhance skill development programs in India, particularly those led by the government and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, it is crucial to identify existing gaps in the current policies and propose actionable recommendations. Below is an analysis of the gaps and suggested policy-level changes.

5. Discussion

1. **Limited Reach and Accessibility:** Many skill development programs fail to effectively serve bottom-of-the-pyramid (BoP) populations, particularly in rural regions. Existing infrastructure often falls short in accommodating diverse groups, resulting in unequal access to training opportunities.
2. **Quality versus Quantity:** Although a large number of individuals have participated in various training schemes, concerns remain about the standard of instruction. These programs frequently emphasize the number of trainees over the quality of training, leading to low employability rates.
3. **Policy Implementation Gaps:** Ongoing changes in policy frameworks—such as merging the National Skill Development Agency with other organisations—cause confusion and disrupt the continuity of skill development initiatives. This inconsistency can lead to overlapping duties and an inefficient use of resources.
4. **Outdated Curriculum:** Many training centres continue to use obsolete curricula that are no longer relevant. There is a pressing need to update course content to reflect current industry practices and requirements.
5. **Weak Industry Linkages:** There is a lack of meaningful collaboration with industry partners to ensure training programs meet market demands. This disconnect creates a gap between the skills taught and those required by employers, making it more challenging for graduates to secure employment.
6. **Insufficient Emphasis on Lifelong Learning:** Existing policies do not adequately encourage ongoing learning or upskilling for those already employed. This shortfall restricts opportunities for career growth and limits workers' ability to adapt to evolving job markets.

Suggestive Collaborative Approach

Government and CSR programs often complement each other through a synergistic approach that leverages the strengths of both sectors. Here are some key ways they work together:

AREAS OF COLLABORATION	GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS	CSR INITIATIVES
Resource Sharing	Provide large-scale funding, infrastructure and policy support.	Contribute additional financial resources, innovative solutions and expertise from the private sector.
Targeted Implementation	Focus on broad, nationwide initiatives	Target specific communities or regions, often addressing local needs and gaps that government programs might overlook.
Capacity Building	Offer training for teachers and facilitators, develop curricula, and establish vocational training centers.	Enhance these efforts by providing specialized training, modern equipment, and technology integration.
Community Involvement & Engagement	Engage local governance structures like Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and School Management Committees (SMCs).	Work closely with local communities, ensuring that initiatives are culturally relevant and community-driven.
Sustainability & Scalability	Ensure long-term sustainability through policy frameworks and continuous funding.	Pilot innovative models that can be scaled up by the government, ensuring wider reach and impact.
Monitoring & Evaluation	Implement standardized monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress.	Introduce agile and flexible evaluation methods, providing real-time feedback and adjustments.
Implementation	For example - The Pradhan Mantri Internship Scheme (PMIS) : A flagship government scheme aimed at providing skill training to millions of youth across India and placing them as interns in Fortune 500 companies	Fortune 500 companies like Tata Steel, L&T, Maruti Suzuki, HUL, Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd and PSUs etc have aligned their CSR activities with PMIS offering internship opportunities

By working together, Government and Corporation's CSR programs can create a more comprehensive and effective skill development ecosystem in India, addressing challenges such as access to quality education, employability, entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods.

5. Practical Implications

This study aims to explore the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in addressing the education and skills gap in India, thereby contributing to the development of a more skilled and employable workforce. CSR programs implemented by corporations have increasingly focused on education and vocational training, providing opportunities for individuals, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to acquire essential skills and improve their career prospects. By analyzing effective CSR models dedicated to education and skill-building, this research evaluates their strengths and limitations to understand their broader societal impact. A comparative assessment of various corporate-led programs helps identify best practices that can be scaled and replicated across different sectors to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in skill development efforts.

Additionally, the study examines the impact of CSR initiatives on educational outcomes, employability, and career progression among individuals belonging to **Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP)** communities. Many communities encounter systemic barriers that restrict access to education and employment. Strategic corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives serve as vital enablers in overcoming these hurdles by providing targeted support and resources. Through the analysis of specific cases, this research illustrates how CSR-driven interventions deliver transformative outcomes, especially in rural regions where educational infrastructure and vocational opportunities are limited.

Notable government-supported efforts—such as the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) and the recently launched Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) in collaboration with leading Fortune 500 firms and Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY)—offer powerful examples of collaborative, industry-integrated skill development. These programs prioritize practical, hands-on training, equipping young people with skills closely aligned to labour market demands. The findings enable the formulation of recommendations for policymakers and corporate leaders regarding the optimal use of CSR investments to advance the 'Viksit Bharat' vision, thereby promoting a competitive, inclusive, and innovation-led economy. Policy harmonization, sustained funding, and cross-sector collaboration position CSR as a catalyst for enduring social and economic

change.

Collectively, these programs demonstrate the essential role of CSR in enhancing education and skill development in rural India. They address core issues such as limited access to quality education, employability, and long-term livelihood security.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

- **Enhancing Accessibility:**
 - Establishment of additional skill development and vocational training centres at village and block levels for better reach to underprivileged populations, including rural youth and women. These centres should act as information hubs for local job and training opportunities.
- **Quality Assurance Mechanisms:**
 - Institute robust result-oriented quality assurance frameworks, evaluation of the training providers based on placement rates and employer feedback on the trainees hired
- **Standardizing Policy Frameworks:**
 - Develop a standard national framework by consolidating diverse skill initiatives under a single authority, ensuring coordination across ministries and a focus on the reduction of policy overlap.
- **Strengthening Industry Partnerships:**
 - Facilitate partnerships between industries and academia to design curricula pertinent to evolving market trends and needs. Engagement of corporate in curriculum development and incentivize apprenticeships and internships within CSR programmes.
- **Promotion of Lifelong Learning:**
 - Integration of lifelong learning into national skill development frameworks & policies, supporting ongoing education and upskilling & re-skilling of employees through financial support for courses in emerging technologies.
- **Implementing CSR Effectively:**
 - Suggest that the corporation prioritise the use of CSR funds for skill-building initiatives customised to local employment needs, requirements and sustainable community practices. Establish standards for CSR projects that focus on long-term impact.
- **Using Technology for Training:**
 - Widen the scope of digital platforms for skill development, using e-learning for accessibility and flexible learning schedules.

Despite considerable progress, challenges such as inequitable resource allocation, improper implementation, and poor monitoring continue to hinder the widespread transformative impact. Sustainable and measurable outcomes depend heavily on effective partnership between the public and private sectors. Further research and continuous policy upgradation are imperative for focused strategies aimed at addressing remaining gaps in access and skill development. By methodically addressing prevailing roadblocks and leveraging emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML) and internet of things (IoT), India stands to improve its skill-building programmes—making them more effective, inclusive, sustainable and responsive to the evolving needs of individuals and the broader economy

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