

NATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP POLICY IN INDIA: PATHWAYS TO DECENT WORK, SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS, AND SKILL EMPLOYABILITY FOR THE VIKSIT BHARAT@ 2047 VISION

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ABSTRACT

Skill development is essential for sustainable development, the promotion of employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship, particularly in vulnerable populations. Since the late 2000s, India has undertaken a major reform initiative to enhance its vocational education and training (VET) system, with the aim of improving the skills of 500 million people. The country introduced its first National Skills Development Strategy in 2009, established the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) in 2013, adopted the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), and launched a revised National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2015. It recognizes the importance of a robust framework for promoting skill development and entrepreneurship as key drivers of growth. The policy's vision is to "create an ecosystem of empowerment by scaling skills at speed and with high standards, while fostering a culture of innovation-based entrepreneurship that generates wealth and employment, ensuring sustainable livelihoods for all citizens of the country." The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has led several initiatives under the Skill India Mission to improve employability and skill development. Notable programs include the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), which offers short-term skill training, and the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK), aimed at standardizing quality training across India. Other programs, such as Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), focus on nonliterate and rural populations, while Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana fosters entrepreneurship. The launch of Skill India Digital (SID) leverages AI-driven tools to match jobs and promote continuous learning. These initiatives collectively work toward building a more skilled and employable workforce in India. Equipping youth with the right skills can shift their focus from being consumers to being creators of wealth and employment. Ultimately, creating employment opportunities can lead to reduced poverty and improved living standards.

KEYWORDS: *Entrepreneurial Skill, Employability, SDG, Skill Policy, Workforce.*

Introduction

Skill development is a key component of sustainable development, focusing on equipping vulnerable populations with the skills required for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship. This approach not only enhances individual livelihoods but also promotes inclusive economic growth and social equity globally (B L & Osabuohien, 2024). For the purpose to address a nation's economic and social development issues, skill development is essential, especially for vulnerable groups, adult workers, school dropouts, and informal workers (Daza, 2005). A robust skill development system and a skilled workforce are key to achieving higher economic status (ILO, 2011). Developed countries have made significant progress in equipping their populations with sector-specific skills (Brown, 2022). India's shift to a knowledge-based economy necessitates the development of a new generation of educated and skilled individuals to meet emerging challenges and opportunities (Tara & Kumar, 2016). Skill development is

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considered a vital solution for emerging nations, such as India, which faces significant transitional challenges. Key issues include fostering democracy rooted in human rights and tolerance, while rapidly advancing human resource development to remain competitive in the global environment. Skill development plays an important role in addressing two major global challenges- poverty reduction and unemployment (King & McGrath, 2002). The education system must adapt to the evolving global environment by fostering creativity and enhancing the quality of education and training across all levels (Tara & Kumar, 2016). Skill is universally recognized as a key asset for employability (Pool & Swell, 2007). According to the HR Council for the Non-profit Sector (2012), skill development is defined as "learning that develops specific skills or competencies related to an individual's job, career, or personal interests" (HR Council for the Non-profit Sector, 2012). Skill development is a vital tool for improving labour productivity, efficiency, and contributions to key sectors of the economy, such as industry, agriculture, manufacturing, education, and communications (Kappor, 2014; Likhi & Sushil, 2017). It plays a central role in the evolving education and labour markets, influenced by global mega trends such as automation, climate change initiatives, digitalization of services and products, and a declining workforce. These shifts transform the nature of the work and skills required.

Objectives

This study analyses the National Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Policy in India, focusing on its pathways to achieving decent work, sustainable livelihoods, and improved skill employability in alignment with the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision's goals of skill outcomes and livelihood development.

Literature Review

Skills development and entrepreneurship policy interventions

Since the early 2000s, the Indian government has introduced various policies and programs focused on promoting skill development, particularly targeting less educated and economically disadvantaged rural youth (Carswell & De Neve, 2023). In 2009, under the Congress-led government, a major skill development initiative was launched with the ambitious goal of training 500 million people by 2022 (National Skills Development Policy, 2009). This marked a significant milestone, initiating a decade of continued investment in skill training. The 2009 National Skill Development Policy clearly outlined its goals, emphasizing that skills training would not only boost productivity but also promote inclusive growth, create more stable employment opportunities, and contribute to the creation of "decent work". In 2014, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was established to oversee the implementation of the National Skill Development Mission, aiming for large-scale, rapid, and standardized skill development. The National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2015) supervised the 2009 policy. Its primary objective is to address the challenge of skill development at scale, with speed, quality standards, and long-term sustainability (National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015). According to the National Policy on Skill Development & Entrepreneurship 2015, which emphasizes entrepreneurship development as a way of increasing wage employment and, consequently, economic growth, the following policy strategies have been identified: (i) educating and equipping potential and early-stage entrepreneurs throughout India; (ii) connecting entrepreneurs to mentors, peers, and incubators; (iii) supporting entrepreneurs through Entrepreneurship Hubs (E-hubs); (iv) catalysing a cultural shift to encourage entrepreneurship; (v) encouraging entrepreneurship among underrepresented groups; (vi) encouraging entrepreneurship among women; (vii) improving the ease of doing business; (viii) improving access to finance; and (ix) fostering social entrepreneurship and grassroots innovations (Sangi & Srija, 2015). On July 15, 2015, during the first World Youth Skills Day, the Skill India scheme was launched (Niti Ayog, 2018). With the launch of the Skill India Mission in 2015, there was a notable shift in the perception of skills related to waste - work. For instance, solid waste management skills were included under the Skill Council for Green Jobs, which was established in 2015 as one of 38 sector skill councils. This reflects a broader recognition of environmental sustainability and green jobs within the skill development framework (Rajendra, 2022). The Skill Council for Green Jobs developed a 160-hour training program for Safai Karamcharis (cleanliness workers), which included aptitude tests and pre/post-training assessments to ensure employability. The training focused on key skills such as communication, teamwork, quality, and commitment to continuous learning (Skill Council for Green Jobs, 2019). Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) was launched in 2015 to promote skill development through free short-term training and monetary incentives. The goal is to enhance youth employability and boost industrial growth. During the pilot phase (2015-16), 19.85 lakh candidates were

selected. A total of 12,000 crores were allocated for PMKVY 2016-20 due to its success and alignment with national initiatives such as Make in India, Digital India, and Swachh Bharat (Government of India, 2016). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights the importance of skill development and the integration of vocational education into the mainstream educational system. This promotes a flexible approach that allows students to enter and exit at various stages with proper certification. Skill universities are pivotal in implementing the goals of NEP 2020 by offering targeted skill training and enabling students to gain practical, industry-relevant skills alongside their academic education.

Since FY 2014-15, till November 2024, 16,90,046 candidates have been trained and 10,97,265 candidates placed in various employment under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY). According to the Ministry of Rural Development (2016), the program's goal is to transform rural poor youth into an economically independent and globally relevant workforce. The scheme executes skill development through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, in which registered private sector partners or project implementation agencies (PIA) plan and administer skills training and position program participants (Chakravorty & Bedi, 2017). Vocational Education and Training (VET) plays a crucial role in achieving Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". This goal emphasizes the need for accessible, high-quality education throughout life, and VET is central to this objective by providing individuals with practical skills, knowledge, and competencies for the workforce. Over the past three years, more than 90 million borrowers have benefited from Prime Minister Mudra Yojana (PMMY). Banks have disbursed nearly INR 3.7 lakh crores as MUDRA loans, helping to create gainful employment opportunities for individuals who would otherwise have struggled to grow their micro-enterprises or start their first ventures. This initiative has played a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurship and economic inclusion, particularly in underserved sectors (FICCI and EY Report, 2017). The mission was to give industries and services the skilled workers they needed to boost economic growth, as well as improve livelihoods and lift people out of poverty (Carswell & De Neve, 2023).

Research Methodology

The study employs an in-depth analysis, leveraging insights from government policy reports and a comprehensive review of relevant literature.

Findings and Discussion

Skill Development for welfare: Viksit Bharat @ 2047 Vision

The Hon'ble Narendra Modi highlighted Amrit Kaal and the vision for 2047 in his Independence Day speech in 2021. By 2047, India will celebrate its 100th year of independence and become a developed nation. There is a slogan Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas. There is a vision of economic growth, social progress, environmental sustainability, and good governance in this slogan. India is developing an ambitious and inspirational economic narrative as it aims to become a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) by 2047. With its incredible growth and the quest for equitable development, this voyage provides a view of a nation undergoing remarkable transformation. Governments and policymakers worldwide are paying careful attention to youth employment, unemployment, and underemployment. With the goal of creating a fully developed country by the 100th anniversary of India's independence, "Viksit Bharat 2047" focuses on the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) to cultivate a vibrant workforce in a constantly changing economy. To address this, the Ministry has outlined a plan to equip trainers from both short-term and long-term skilling ecosystems with the necessary technology and skills to assist learners in engaging with the market in the future. With a vibrant and active generation spearheading the goal of making India a developed nation by 2047, the country's youth are its greatest asset. This revolutionary roadmap places strong emphasis on sustainable development, inclusive growth, and efficient governance. Building on this vision, the Union Budget for 2023-2024, the first budget of Amrit Kaal, envisioned India as a technology-driven and knowledge-based economy with strong public finances and a robust financial sector. It reiterates that Jan Bhagidari (people's participation) through Sabka Saath, Sabka Prayas is essential for realizing this vision. The budget also outlined the Saptarishi's principles: i). Inclusive Development, ii). Reaching the Last Mile, iii). Infrastructure and Investment, iv). Unleashing potential, v). Green Growth, vi). Youth Power, v). Financial Sector.

The vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India) can only be achieved through Viksit States (Developed States). The aspirations of Viksit Bharat must reach the grassroots level extending to every

district, block, and village. For this purpose, every State and district should prepare a comprehensive vision for 2047 to make meaningful contributions towards a developed India by 2047. The Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESDP) Scheme is designed to encourage young individuals from various sections of society, including SC/ST women, physically handicapped persons, ex-servicemen, and those from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households, to pursue self-employment or entrepreneurship. The scheme aims to equip these individuals with the necessary skills and resources to consider entrepreneurship a viable career option, fostering economic independence and social inclusion.

- **Skill Employability**

The goal of achieving a *Viksit Bharat* (Developed India) by 2047 is expected to be supported through initiatives in the MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) sector. These measures are intended to foster the growth and development of MSMEs, which are pivotal in driving economic progress and job creation in India. Employability is an arrangement of achievements—skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics—that increase the probability of finding a decent job (Narayanan & Nandi, 2017). The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has progressively expanded its responsibilities through various skilling schemes and organizations. Key initiatives include the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), National Institute for Entrepreneurship & Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Directorate General of Training (DGT). The scheme of supporting Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) is designed to empower marginalized, deprived, and underprivileged communities through customized skill training. It targets non-literate persons, neo-literates, those with primary education up to 8th standard, and school dropouts up to 12th standard, focusing on the age group of 15-45. Most opportunities are given to women, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities, persons with disabilities, and other socially and economically backward groups. JSS extends skill development opportunities directly to beneficiaries, working with minimal infrastructure and resources to ensure access and promote self-employment or wage employment. JSSs have established Livelihood Cells to investigate potential options for both wage and self-employment, assists the learner in obtaining work by offering information and counselling. The Cell additionally assists the recipients in obtaining loans from financial institutions to launch small businesses and self-employment companies. Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) offer courses across 19 sectors tailored to meet local market demand. These sectors include: Apparel, Made-ups, and Home Furnishing, Automotive, Capital Goods and Manufacturing, Beauty and Wellness, Domestic Workers, Electronics and Hardware, Environmental Science, Food Processing, Gems and Jewellery, Handicrafts and Carpentry, IT-ITES, Leather, Mining, Organized Retail, Paints and Coatings, Plumbing, Rubber Industry, Textiles and Handlooms, and Wood and Carpentry. This diverse range ensures skill development aligned with local employment opportunities and market needs. Skills development raises the incomes and standard of living of the impoverished by improving output, quality, variety, workplace safety, and health. Along with strengthening knowledge of rural organizations, governance, and informal sector groups, it also aids in the development of social capital (Atchoarena & Delluc, 2002). The market for beauty salons in India, the world's second-largest beauty market, is expanding twice as quickly as that of the United States and Europe (KPMG, 2018). Between FY 2018-19 and FY 2023-24, Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) trained 26.36 lakh beneficiaries, with women making up an impressive 82% of the total. The social category-wise distribution of beneficiaries includes Scheduled Castes (SC) at 24%, Scheduled Tribes (ST) at 15%, Other Backward Classes (OBC) at 37%, Minorities at 9%, and General category at 16%. This highlights the program's focus on inclusivity and its significant impact on empowering women and marginalized communities. In 2023-24, 290 Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) targeted training 5,22,000 beneficiaries, enrolling 507,415 and training 506,398 by May 2024. The majority were women 79.43%, with 74.5% from BPL and 84.3% from SC/ST/OBC/minority groups, primarily aged 15-25 (53.3%) with basic education (53.82%) (Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, 2024). In the recent Union Budget, a new version of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 4.0) was announced for training lakhs of youth in cutting-edge fields like Industry 4.0, Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, mechatronics, Internet of Things, and drones. This scheme provides industry-relevant training to bridge the skills gap. Interested employers can access candidate details on Skills India Digital Hub (SIDH), a platform connecting skilled workers with employers. The platform also offers a Job Exchange Option, enabling candidates to search for job opportunities and apply directly.

Table 1: Top Ten Jobs under PMKVY 4.0 (Based on Enrollment Numbers)

S. No	Job Role	Enrolled	Trained/Oriented
1	Traditional Hand Embroiderer	1,17,340	5,233
2	Sewing Machine Operator	70,405	23,165
3	Domestic Data Entry Operator	60,500	11,840
4	Electric Vehicle Service Technician	42,666	946
5	Associate Data Entry Operator	39,579	26,821
6	Finisher & Packer	38,215	1,931
7	Self-Employed Tailor	38,083	15,052
8	CCTV Installation Technician	37,595	1,947
9	Hand Embroiderer (Addawala)	37,363	6,911
10	Domestic IT Helpdesk Attendant	32,873	11,254

Source: Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Annual Report, 2023-24

This table 1 highlights the key sectors driving skill development and employment opportunities under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0 initiative. The top ten jobs identified through enrollment numbers provide valuable insights into the current workforce trends and industry demands in India. Traditional Hand Embroiderer leads with over 1.17 lakh enrollments, indicating a strong interest in traditional crafts. Jobs like Electric Vehicle Service Technician and CCTV Installation Technician highlight the growing need for technology-driven skills. Roles such as Associate Data Entry Operator and Sewing Machine Operator show high training-to-enrollment conversion rates, reflecting program efficiency. This overview showcases the diverse scope of PMKVY 4.0, emphasizing both traditional and modern job roles to meet evolving workforce demands.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0, Flipkart has partnered to upskill thousands of youths across India, particularly in the e-commerce and supply chain sectors. The program offers candidates a comprehensive training experience, including 7 days of intensive classroom sessions followed by 45 days of practical industry exposure at Flipkart's facilities. This initiative aims to boost employability and contribute to India's economic growth by providing specialized training and certification. Flipkart has already empowered 1.8 million livelihoods, especially women entrepreneurs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and continues to enhance the broader e-commerce ecosystem, supporting India's development (PIB, 2024). The Swiggy Skills initiative, launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) under the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, aims to provide skilling and employment opportunities within Swiggy's food delivery and quick commerce network. It offers training, internships, and job opportunities in restaurant operations and retail management. By integrating with the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), the platform will provide online courses, certifications, and skill development resources to Swiggy's 2.4 lakh delivery partners and restaurant staff, enhancing their skills and employability. *"The partnership will drive transformation at two levels. It will increase the economic contribution of the retail and supply chain logistics sector while creating skilling, upskilling, and reskilling opportunities for the workforce. Integrating with Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), under the initiative, Swiggy Skills, the Swiggy partner platform will enable its ecosystem to access skill loans, courses, credits and certifications, empowering individuals to enhance their skills and livelihood opportunities through this platform"* (Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship)(PIB, 2024).The goal of the skill development strategy should be to meet the skill requirements of both casual employees and self-employed workers. According to the Economic Survey 2013–14, "India can increase its long-term trend growth by strengthening the economic freedom of the people and unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit of millions across the country" (Sangi & Srija, 2015).

- **Decent Work and Sustainable Livelihoods**

Among the Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 8 - Decent work and economic growth - is the most directly work-focused (Carr, 2023). The concept of decent work, as envisioned by the ILO, it highlights the need to improve conditions for all workers, whether waged or unwaged, in formal or informal economies. By advocating for re-regulation and expanded social and labour protections (Vosko, 2002).It includes opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all men and women(ILO (International Labour Organization), 1999–2023).Work is the path out of poverty for impoverished households, and the creation of productive and decent employment is how economies grow and diversify (International Labour Office, 2013).

A livelihood encompasses the capabilities, assets (such as resources, stores, claims, and access), and activities necessary for sustaining a living. A sustainable livelihood is one that can withstand and recover from stresses and shocks, preserve, or enhance its assets and capabilities, and create opportunities for future generations. Additionally, it contributes positively to other livelihoods at both local and global levels, ensuring benefits in both the short and long term (Chambers & Conway, 1991). The study by Naithani, S., and Saha, A.K. (2021) explores social capital and livelihood strategies in response after 2013 Kedarnath disaster (India), highlighting significant shifts in livelihood assets in Devli-Bhani Gram village. The disaster prompted changes in how the community utilized and adapted its resources, networks, and capabilities to recover and sustain their livelihoods. The development of sustainable livelihood models, such as Mandakini Mahila Bunkar Samiti (MMBS) based on skills like handicraft making, handloom weaving, or similar crafts, offers long-term solutions to the livelihood disruptions caused by disasters. The livelihood strategies of the residents shifted significantly, with an increasing number of individuals adopting new skill development programs that promised future earning potential. The village saw the emergence of sewing centres exclusively for women, offering free sewing lessons, and computer training centres open to both girls and boys, aimed at enhancing their skill base. A key player in facilitating diversified livelihood options for women in nearby affected villages was the locally developed Mandakini Mahila Bunkar Samiti (MMBS), an NGO focused on empowering women through skill-based initiatives. The initiative provided self-sustaining, monsoon-independent livelihood opportunities for women, beginning with a six-month training program in skills such as patchwork painting, spinning yarn, knitting, sewing, and handicraft making. Once trained, participants began producing marketable goods. To ensure consistent participation, salaries were paid during training. The enterprise was designed to operate in an integrated way, ensuring a steady supply of raw materials and demand from local, national, and international markets. By 2019, it had successfully achieved this goal, with products available on platforms like ehaat online, and the Panchahuli Weavers Association head winning the McNulty Prize for teaching weaving skills to MMBS women. This initiative not only provided financial support for daily expenses but also equipped villagers with valuable skills, creating long-term opportunities for economic stability (Naithani & Saha, 2021). Three components comprise a livelihood: livelihood outcomes, livelihood strategies, and livelihood capitals, where they assist in meeting a household's or an individual's basic needs. Livelihood is usually determined by the household's capital or access to resources, ability to manage resources, activities carried out by household members, and household outcomes (Giri, 2024).

The Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), part of the *Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)*, supports Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their families in establishing small enterprises in the non-farm sector. As of March 2024, proposals for 358 SVEP blocks have been approved in 31 states and Union Territories (UTs), with Detailed Project Reports for 235 blocks also approved. By March 2024, the program has assisted in setting up 2.93 lakh enterprises across 29 states and UTs. The goal of SVEP is to help rural communities rise out of poverty by aiding them in establishing enterprises and providing necessary support until these businesses stabilize. The program focuses on creating sustainable livelihoods and self-employment opportunities, offering financial assistance, training in business management, and soft skills development (Ministry of Rural Development, 2018). Additionally, it aims to build a local community cadre for promoting and supporting enterprise growth. Skill development is crucial for securing and promoting decent work, especially in India, where harnessing the potential demographic dividend of a young workforce is key to economic growth. It also plays a pivotal role in facilitating the transition of workers from the informal to the formal economy. Moreover, with rapid technological advancements and the evolving demand for diverse skill sets, lifelong learning and continuous skill development have become essential for workers to remain competitive and adaptable in the modern job market.

- **Concluding Remarks**

Skill development is a vital catalyst for poverty reduction, as it boosts employability, enhances productivity, and supports the growth of sustainable enterprises. Developing skills among self-employed individuals is crucial for transforming them into successful entrepreneurs or employers. The key principle is that an individual's contribution to economic growth is directly tied to their human capital—education, knowledge, skills, competencies, and other attributes that are essential for economic activity. Consequently, enhancing the skills and knowledge of the labour force is an important strategy for driving national economic growth.

The National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015, aim to meet the challenge of skilling at scale with speed and consistency (quality). It will seek to establish a general framework for all skill-building initiatives conducted nationwide, bringing them into compliance with shared criteria and connecting skill development to demand centers. Apart from establishing the goals and anticipated results, the endeavour will also involve identifying the different institutional frameworks that can serve as a means of achieving the desired results. This policy will connect increased production and employability to skill development (National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015).

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