



“Skill Development for Youth Capacity Building in Higher Education: A Secondary Data Analysis with a Soft Skills Framework under NEP 2020 towards Viksit Bharat @ 2047”

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of skill development in enhancing youth capacity within the framework of higher education in Andhra Pradesh, in alignment with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047. The paper is based on secondary data collected from policy documents, government reports, and existing literature on employability and skill development. The analysis highlights a significant gap between academic knowledge (hard skills) and essential life and professional competencies (soft skills) among undergraduate and postgraduate students, particularly in commerce and management streams.

Drawing from classical perspectives and contemporary policy insights, the study identifies key soft skills such as self-awareness, communication, teamwork, time management, and stress management as critical for youth empowerment. The paper proposes a structured skill framework integrating foundational, employability, and future-oriented competencies required for building a resilient and productive workforce.

The findings emphasize that holistic skill development, supported by curriculum redesign, industry collaboration, and experiential learning, is essential to prepare students for the evolving global economy. The study concludes that strengthening soft skills alongside technical knowledge will play a crucial role in achieving the national goal of a developed India by 2047.

KEYWORDS: NEP 2020, Viksit Bharat @ 2047, Youth Capacity Building, Soft Skills, Employability Skills, Higher Education, Skill Development, Andhra Pradesh

1. Introduction

Education has long been recognized as the most powerful instrument for national development. The Kothari Commission rightly observed that *“the destiny of a nation is shaped in its classrooms.”* This assertion remains highly relevant in the contemporary context, where youth constitute a significant demographic dividend for India. Harnessing this potential effectively is central to achieving the vision of a developed nation under **Viksit Bharat @ 2047**.

India's higher education system, particularly in states like Andhra Pradesh, is undergoing a paradigm shift with the implementation of the **National Education Policy 2020**. The policy emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, and skill-oriented education aimed at bridging the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. It strongly advocates the integration of vocational education, experiential learning, and soft skill development to enhance employability and productivity among graduates.

Despite the expansion of higher education, a persistent challenge remains—the mismatch between the skills acquired by students and those demanded by the labor market. Reports from national agencies consistently indicate that while students possess adequate **hard skills** (technical knowledge and academic qualifications), they often lack **soft skills** such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and emotional intelligence. This gap is particularly evident among undergraduate students, who form a major segment of the employable youth population.

Soft skills, often referred to as **people skills or behavioral competencies**, encompass a range of personal attributes including self-awareness, positive attitude, effective communication, and interpersonal abilities. Unlike hard skills, which are measurable and domain-specific, soft skills are intangible but critically influence an individual's professional success and career progression. In the modern corporate environment characterized by globalization, cultural diversity, and rapid technological change, these skills have become indispensable.

The present study builds upon the foundational understanding that **technical competence alone is insufficient for career success**. Drawing insights from secondary data sources such as policy documents, educational reports, and prior research, this paper examines the role of skill development in enhancing youth capacity in higher education. It further extends the discussion by proposing a structured framework of essential soft skills required for students to effectively contribute to economic and social development.

Particular attention is given to the context of arts, science, commerce and management education, where employability, communication, and decision-making skills are of paramount importance. Students in these disciplines are expected not only to possess subject knowledge but also to demonstrate professional competencies that align with industry expectations.

In the backdrop of NEP 2020 and the national aspiration of becoming a developed economy by 2047, this study aims to reposition skill development as a central pillar of higher education. By integrating traditional soft skill concepts with contemporary policy directions, the paper seeks to provide a comprehensive approach to youth capacity building that is both practical and forward-looking.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study is designed to examine and analyze the role of skill development in building youth capacity in higher education within the framework of NEP 2020 and the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047. The specific objectives are:

1. To analyze the importance of skill development in enhancing youth capacity in higher education.
2. To examine the gap between academic knowledge and employability skills among undergraduate and postgraduate students.
3. To review existing secondary data and policy frameworks, particularly the National Education Policy 2020, relating to skill development.
4. To identify key soft skills required for commerce and management students for professional success.
5. To develop a structured soft skills framework for youth capacity building aligned with the goals of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.
6. To suggest policy and academic recommendations for integrating skill development into higher education, especially in Andhra Pradesh.

3. Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What is the role of skill development in enhancing youth capacity in higher education?
2. What are the major skill gaps observed among UG and PG students, particularly in arts, science, commerce and management streams?
3. How does NEP 2020 emphasize skill-based education and employability?
4. Which soft skills are most essential for students to succeed in the modern professional environment?
5. How can higher education institutions effectively integrate skill development into their curriculum?
6. What kind of skill framework is required to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047?

4. Scope of the Study

- The study focuses on higher education in Andhra Pradesh, with special reference to undergraduate and post graduate students.
- It emphasizes skill development, particularly soft skills, as a tool for youth capacity building.
- The study is limited to secondary data sources, including policy documents, reports, and existing literature.
- It aims to provide conceptual and practical insights, rather than primary empirical findings.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Nature of the Study

The study is **descriptive and analytical in nature**, based entirely on **secondary data**.

5.2 Sources of Data

The data for the study is collected from the following sources:

- Policy documents such as the National Education Policy 2020
- Reports from:
 - All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)
 - National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)
 - NITI Aayog
- Books, journals, and research articles on skill development and employability
- Relevant websites and online databases

5.3 Method of Analysis

- Content Analysis: Examination of policy documents and literature
- Comparative Analysis: Comparing required skills vs existing education outcomes
- Thematic Analysis: Categorizing skills into structured groups
- Conceptual Framework Development: Designing a skill model for youth capacity building

5.4 Rationale for Using Secondary Data

- Availability of comprehensive national-level reports
- Ability to analyse long-term trends and policy directions
- Suitable for conceptual framework building
- Ensures broad coverage beyond a single institution

6. Review of Literature

The importance of skill development in higher education has been widely acknowledged in academic and policy discourse. With the growing complexity of the global economy and the dynamic nature of employment, the focus has gradually shifted from mere acquisition of knowledge to the development of holistic competencies, particularly soft skills.

The **National Education Policy 2020** emphasizes the need for integrating skill-based education at all levels of higher education. It advocates a multidisciplinary approach, experiential learning, and the incorporation of vocational and life skills to enhance employability. The policy clearly recognizes that traditional rote learning methods are insufficient to meet the demands of the 21st-century workforce.

Studies conducted by national agencies such as the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** highlight a significant **skill gap among Indian graduates**, particularly in communication, problem-solving, and teamwork abilities. These findings indicate that while students may possess adequate domain knowledge, they often lack the interpersonal and cognitive skills required in professional environments.

Similarly, reports from **NITI Aayog** emphasize the need for a **future-ready workforce**, equipped with digital literacy, adaptability, and innovation skills. The transformation towards a knowledge-based economy requires individuals who are not only technically competent but also capable of critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving.

The **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)** reports further reveal that although enrolment in higher education has increased significantly, **employability outcomes remain a concern**. This disconnect between education and employment underscores the urgent need for integrating skill development into the curriculum, particularly in commerce and management education where industry expectations are rapidly evolving.

From a conceptual perspective, scholars have distinguished between **hard skills** and **soft skills**, emphasizing that both are essential but serve different purposes. Hard skills refer to technical competencies acquired through formal education, whereas soft skills relate to behavioral attributes such as communication, attitude, and emotional intelligence. As noted by **Dr. K. Alex**, soft skills significantly influence personal effectiveness and professional success.

Classical works such as *Art and Illusion* by **Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich** provide insights into perception and cognitive interpretation, which are crucial components of interpersonal communication and decision-making. These theoretical perspectives reinforce the importance of perception management and cognitive flexibility as essential soft skills.

Further, literature on employability skills indicates that attributes such as **self-awareness, positive attitude, communication skills, teamwork, and time management** are critical determinants of career success.

Research on workplace dynamics suggests that organizations increasingly prioritize **behavioral competencies over technical expertise** when selecting and promoting employees. The shift from hierarchical to collaborative work environments necessitates skills such as leadership, adaptability, and emotional intelligence.

In the Indian context, particularly in states like Andhra Pradesh, higher education institutions are gradually recognizing the need to integrate skill development into academic programs. However, implementation challenges such as lack of trained faculty, inadequate industry linkages, and limited infrastructure continue to hinder progress.

Moreover, global trends indicate a growing demand for **21st-century skills**, including digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning abilities. These skills are essential for achieving the broader national objective of **Viksit Bharat @ 2047**, which envisions India as a developed and self-reliant nation.

In summary, the existing literature strongly supports the argument that **skill development is central to youth capacity building**. However, there is a need to develop a **structured and context-specific skill framework**, particularly for commerce and management students, to bridge the gap between education and employability. The present study attempts to address this gap by integrating insights from secondary data.

7. Analysis of Skill Gaps in Higher Education

The expansion of higher education in India over the past two decades has significantly increased access and enrolment. However, this quantitative growth has not been accompanied by a proportional improvement in the quality of employable skills among graduates. The mismatch between **academic output and industry expectations** has emerged as a critical concern, particularly in commerce and management education.

Secondary data from national reports and policy documents indicate that a large proportion of graduates remain **underprepared for the professional environment**. While students acquire theoretical knowledge and subject-specific competencies (hard skills), they often lack the behavioral and cognitive abilities required to effectively apply this knowledge in real-world situations.

One of the major gaps identified is in **communication skills**. Many students struggle with articulating their ideas clearly, both in written and oral forms. This directly affects their performance in group discussions, interviews, and workplace interactions. Despite studying commerce and management subjects, where communication plays a central role, students often exhibit low confidence and inadequate language proficiency.

Another significant gap lies in **self-awareness and personality development**. The ability to “know oneself,” is fundamental to personal and professional growth. However, the current education system provides limited opportunities for students to assess their strengths, weaknesses, and career aspirations systematically. As a result, many graduates lack direction and clarity in their career paths.

The absence of a **positive attitude and value-based orientation** is also a concern. In a competitive and dynamic work environment, attributes such as adaptability, resilience, and ethical behavior are essential. Yet, these are rarely emphasized within the traditional curriculum, which focuses primarily on examination performance rather than character development.

Further, there exists a notable deficiency in teamwork and interpersonal skills. Modern organizations operate in collaborative environments where individuals must work effectively in diverse teams. However, students often lack exposure to structured team-based activities, resulting in poor coordination, conflict management issues, and limited leadership capabilities.

The gap in **practical employability skills** such as resume preparation, interview handling, and professional etiquette is particularly evident. Many graduates enter the job market without adequate preparation for recruitment processes. This leads to low placement rates and reduced confidence among job seekers.

Time management and stress management are additional areas where students face challenges. Academic pressure, coupled with uncertainty about career prospects, often results in stress and anxiety. Without proper coping mechanisms and planning skills, students find it difficult to maintain productivity and emotional well-being.

8. Need for Skill Development in the Context of NEP 2020

The **National Education Policy 2020** addresses these challenges by advocating a **holistic and skill-oriented approach to education**. It recognizes that the purpose of education extends beyond knowledge acquisition to include the development of critical life skills, employability, and responsible citizenship.

NEP 2020 emphasizes:

- Experiential learning (learning by doing)
- Skill integration across disciplines
- Internships and industry exposure
- Focus on communication and soft skills

These provisions are particularly relevant for commerce and management students, who are expected to transition smoothly from academic environments to professional settings.

The policy also promotes the concept of **lifelong learning**, where individuals continuously upgrade their skills to remain relevant in a rapidly changing economy. This is crucial in the context of technological advancements and globalization, which demand adaptability and continuous skill enhancement.

9. Skill Development and Viksit Bharat @ 2047

The vision of **Viksit Bharat @ 2047** places youth at the centre of national development. Achieving this vision requires a workforce that is not only technically competent but also **innovative, ethical, and globally competitive**.

Skill development plays a pivotal role in:

- Enhancing productivity and efficiency
- Promoting entrepreneurship and innovation
- Reducing unemployment and underemployment
- Strengthening global competitiveness

For states like Andhra Pradesh, which are striving for economic growth and industrial development, investing in youth capacity building through skill development is essential.

10. Synthesis

The analysis clearly indicates that:

- There exists a **significant gap between education and employability**
- **Soft skills are critical but underdeveloped**
- Policy frameworks like NEP 2020 provide direction but require effective implementation

This creates a strong justification for developing a **structured skill framework**, which is presented in the next section, drawing extensively from the author's original work on essential soft skills.

11. Proposed Skill Framework for Youth Capacity Building

Based on the analysis of secondary data, policy directions under the **National Education Policy 2020**, and the author's original work on soft skills, a **comprehensive skill framework** is proposed for enhancing youth capacity in higher education.

This framework is designed to prepare students—particularly those in arts, science, commerce and management disciplines—for the evolving demands of the professional world and to contribute effectively towards the vision of **Viksit Bharat @ 2047**.

11.1 Structure of the Skill Framework

The proposed framework classifies skills into **five major categories**:

Category	Skill Components
A. Self-Development Skills	Know Thyself, Positive Attitude, Values, Perception
B. Communication Skills	Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing, Body Language
C. Interpersonal & Team Skills	Teamwork, Group Discussion, Etiquette & Manners
D. Employability Skills	Resume Writing, Interview Skills
E. Personal Management Skills	Time Management, Stress Management

11.2 Explanation of Skill Categories

A. Self-Development Skills

These skills form the **foundation of personality development** and are essential for building self-confidence and clarity.

- **Know Thyself:**

Self-awareness enables individuals to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Tools like SWOT analysis help students align their abilities with career opportunities.

- **Positive Attitude:**

A constructive mindset enhances resilience, motivation, and the ability to handle challenges effectively.

- **Values:**

Ethical principles guide behavior and decision-making, contributing to responsible citizenship and professional integrity.

- **Perception:**

The ability to interpret situations accurately and adopt multiple perspectives is crucial in a diverse work environment.

These skills align with NEP 2020's emphasis on holistic and value-based education.

B. Communication Skills

Communication is the **backbone of professional success**, especially in commerce and management fields.

- **Listening Skills:**

Active listening improves understanding, reduces conflicts, and enhances relationships.

- **Reading Skills:**

Reading develops analytical thinking and knowledge acquisition abilities.

- **Speaking Skills:**

Effective verbal communication helps in presentations, discussions, and leadership roles.

- **Writing Skills:**

Essential for reports, emails, and professional documentation.

- **Body Language:**

Non-verbal communication significantly influences interpersonal interactions and professional impressions.

These skills are critical for employability and workplace effectiveness.

C. Interpersonal & Team Skills

Modern organizations function through **collaborative work environments**, making these skills indispensable.

- **Teamwork:**

The ability to work cooperatively towards common goals.

- **Group Discussion Skills:**

Enhances critical thinking, articulation, and leadership abilities.

- **Etiquette and Manners:**

Professional behavior and social conduct improve workplace relationships and organizational culture.

These skills support leadership development and organizational success.

D. Employability Skills

These skills directly influence **job acquisition and career advancement**.

- **Resume Writing:**

A well-structured resume effectively presents one's qualifications and achievements.

- **Interview Skills:**

The ability to confidently present oneself and respond appropriately during interviews.

These skills bridge the gap between education and employment.

E. Personal Management Skills

These skills are essential for maintaining **productivity and well-being**.

- **Time Management:**

Efficient utilization of time enhances academic and professional performance.

- **Stress Management:**

Managing emotional and psychological pressure is crucial for sustained success.

These skills contribute to long-term career sustainability and personal well-being.

11.3 Integration with NEP 2020

The proposed framework aligns with key principles of the **National Education Policy 2020**:

- **Holistic Development** → Self-development + Personal management
- **Skill-Based Education** → Communication + Employability skills
- **Experiential Learning** → Teamwork + Group discussions
- **Value-Based Education** → Ethics, attitude, and behavior

11.4 Relevance to Viksit Bharat @ 2047

To achieve the goals of **Viksit Bharat @ 2047**, the youth must be:

- **Self-reliant** → Self-development skills
- **Professionally competent** → Employability skills
- **Globally competitive** → Communication skills
- **Socially responsible** → Values and ethics

12. Discussion

The proposed skill framework provides a structured and comprehensive approach to addressing the persistent gap between academic learning and employability in higher education. The analysis of secondary data, combined with the practical insights derived from the author's teaching experience, reveals that **capacity building among youth requires a balanced integration of knowledge, skills, and attitude.**

One of the key observations is that the current higher education system, while effective in imparting theoretical knowledge, does not adequately focus on the **development of behavioral and life skills**. This imbalance results in graduates who are academically qualified but lack the competencies required to perform effectively in professional environments. The framework developed in this study attempts to bridge this gap by organizing essential soft skills into clearly defined categories.

The emphasis on **self-development skills** highlights the importance of internal transformation as a prerequisite for external success. Skills such as self-awareness, positive attitude, and value orientation enable students to develop confidence, clarity, and ethical grounding. These attributes are particularly important in a diverse and dynamic workplace where individuals must adapt to varying situations and challenges.

The inclusion of **communication skills** reflects their central role in professional success. In arts, science, commerce and management disciplines, effective communication is not merely an additional skill but a core competency. The ability to listen, articulate ideas, and present information clearly determines an individual's effectiveness in teamwork, leadership, and decision-making processes.

Further, the framework recognizes the growing importance of **interpersonal and team skills** in modern organizational structures. As workplaces become increasingly collaborative, the ability to work in teams, participate in group discussions, and maintain professional etiquette becomes critical. These skills also contribute to leadership development and organizational harmony.

The focus on **employability skills** such as resume preparation and interview techniques addresses a practical gap often observed among students. Many graduates, despite possessing adequate knowledge, fail to secure employment due to lack of preparation for recruitment processes. By incorporating these skills into the educational framework, institutions can significantly improve student placement outcomes.

The importance of **personal management skills**, particularly time and stress management, cannot be overlooked. In an environment characterized by academic pressure and competitive job markets, students must develop the ability to manage their time effectively and cope with stress. These skills are essential for maintaining productivity, mental well-being, and long-term career sustainability.

13. Implications for Higher Education

The findings of this study have important implications for higher education institutions, particularly in the context of the **National Education Policy 2020**.

1. Curriculum Redesign

Higher education institutions should integrate **skill-based modules** into existing curricula. This includes:

- Communication skill training
- Personality development courses
- Practical workshops and simulations

Such integration will ensure that skill development becomes a **continuous and structured process**, rather than an optional activity.

2. Experiential Learning and Pedagogy

Teaching methods should shift from **lecture-based learning to experiential learning**, including:

- Group discussions
- Role plays
- Case studies
- Internships

This aligns with NEP 2020's emphasis on **learning by doing** and enhances the practical application of knowledge.

3. Industry-Academia Collaboration

Institutions should establish stronger linkages with industry to:

- Understand current skill requirements
- Provide internship opportunities
- Conduct guest lectures and training sessions

This will help in reducing the **skill mismatch** and improving employability.

4. Faculty Development

Faculty members play a crucial role in skill development. Therefore:

- Training programs should be conducted to equip teachers with **modern pedagogical and mentoring skills**
- Faculty should be encouraged to adopt **interactive teaching methods**

5. Student Support Systems

Institutions should provide:

- Career counseling services
- Placement training programs
- Stress management and wellness initiatives

These measures will support students in their **academic and professional journey**.

6. Policy and Institutional Alignment

The implementation of the proposed framework should be aligned with national goals such as **Viksit Bharat @ 2047**, ensuring that higher education contributes effectively to national development.

14. Synthesis

The discussion clearly indicates that:

- Skill development must be **integrated, continuous, and practice-oriented**
- Soft skills are **not supplementary but essential**
- Institutional efforts must align with **policy directions and industry needs**

The proposed framework offers a **practical roadmap** for achieving these objectives and enhancing youth capacity in higher education.

15. Conclusion

The present study reaffirms that **skill development is a critical determinant of youth capacity building** in higher education. In the context of rapid economic transformation, globalization, and technological advancement, mere acquisition of academic knowledge is no longer sufficient. Students must be equipped with a comprehensive set of skills that enable them to adapt, perform, and excel in diverse professional environments.

The analysis of secondary data highlights a persistent **gap between educational outcomes and employability requirements**, particularly among undergraduate and postgraduate students in commerce and management streams. While higher education institutions have succeeded in expanding access, the quality and relevance of skill development remain areas of concern.

The **National Education Policy 2020** provides a transformative framework to address these challenges by emphasizing holistic, multidisciplinary, and skill-oriented education. However, the effectiveness of this policy largely depends on its implementation at the institutional level.

The proposed skill framework in this study, derived from both secondary data and practical teaching experience, offers a **structured and actionable approach** to integrating soft skills into higher education. By focusing on self-development, communication, interpersonal relations, employability, and personal management, the framework ensures a balanced development of students.

Achieving the vision of **Viksit Bharat @ 2047** requires a workforce that is not only knowledgeable but also skilled, ethical, and adaptable. Higher education institutions, therefore, have a crucial responsibility in preparing students to meet these expectations.

In essence, **soft skills are no longer optional—they are indispensable** for personal success, professional growth, and national development. A sincere and systematic effort to inculcate these skills among students will contribute significantly to building a competent and confident youth population capable of driving India towards a developed future.

16. Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are offered:

A. Institutional Level

1. **Integrate skill development into curriculum** as compulsory components across all UG and PG programs.
2. Establish **Skill Development Cells** in colleges to provide continuous training.
3. Conduct regular **workshops, seminars, and training programs** on soft skills.
4. Strengthen **placement training programs**, focusing on interviews and group discussions.

B. Policy Level

1. Ensure effective implementation of the **National Education Policy 2020** at institutional levels.
2. Promote **industry-academia partnerships** for practical exposure.
3. Introduce **skill certification programs** aligned with national standards.
4. Provide funding and support for **skill-based education initiatives**, especially in states like Andhra Pradesh.

C. Faculty Level

1. Encourage faculty to adopt **interactive and experiential teaching methods**.
2. Organize **faculty development programs** on skill-based pedagogy.
3. Promote **mentoring systems** for guiding students in career planning.

D. Student Level

1. Students should actively engage in **self-assessment and personality development**.
2. Participate in **group discussions, presentations, and internships**.
3. Develop habits of **time management and stress management**.
4. Focus on continuous learning and **upskilling in emerging areas**.

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