# Digital skilling in G20

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**Why is in news?** India's current Group of Twenty (G20) Presidency is an opportunity to strengthen cooperation in digital skilling as a significant step towards an inclusive future of work.

**Future of the workforce**

In recent years, digital technologies have been the driving force of greater productivity, efficiency, and innovation in the economy.

The digital economy has also created a strong demand for a digitally proficient workforce. A digitally-capable, future-ready workforce is crucial to make sure that the move towards the 'future of work' furthers inclusivity in the digital economy.

Technology is changing the modes of work and how individuals and organisations access work, leading to greater flexibility in talent mobility.

The growth of hybrid and remote work accelerated due to the pandemic has given impetus to hiring digitally skilled talent across geographies.

Organisations are moving towards gig for technology roles which traditionally were restricted to human resources and support functions.

The gig economy empowers individuals to work for any organisation from any location. A person skilled in AI may be sitting in Lucknow but could work for a company based in South Africa.

The 'future of work' would be changing as businesses and governments seek to integrate technology into their operations and become more efficient and goal-oriented.

Steady emergence and maturation of technologies, such as advanced robotics, the Internet of Things, Big Data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and quantum computing have created important tools for businesses to rely on.

**Digital technology: Ensuring industry-ready workforce**

There is global recognition that the lack of availability of a digitally skilled workforce is one of the major impediments to business growth.

The emergence of modern technologies has also significantly altered foundational skills required to perform tasks in job roles across engineering, communication, project management, and decision-making.

Hence, there is a need for constant upgrades in digital skills. In this pursuit, literacy, reskilling, and upskilling must become fundamental pillars of a comprehensive digital skill strategy.

Reskilling and up skilling strategies could be designed based on the extent of digital skill gaps in the workforce. What can also make this strategy effective is ensuring the accessibility of these skills.

Accessibility here encompasses access to devices and infrastructure, alongside supplementary skills, to ensure responsible and safe use of digital technologies.

Global deployment accelerates growth and enhances global prosperity. For a borderless economy, mutual recognition of skills is imperative.

There is a need to identify future job roles and redevelop global occupation and qualification standards to be consistent across industries.

## Digital skilling: Cornerstone of India's resilient growth

As a young nation, with nearly 62 per cent of its population in the working age group of 15-59 years and more than 50 per cent below 25 years, India has great potential to drive growth on the back of its working-age population.

There is a global crisis for technology talent heightened by skill shortage. India is relatively well placed with a demand-supply gap of about 21 per cent, which is below countries like the US, China, and the UK.

By 2030, India's share of total work hours using physical and manual skills is expected to decline by 2.2 per cent; the time devoted to technological skills will rise by 3.3 per cent.

The promotion of digital skills is a national priority.

In the recent Budget, there is an announcement of the Skill India digital platform, enabling demand-based formal skilling, linking with employers, and facilitating access to entrepreneurship schemes and the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme.

## MeitY's initiatives

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has started programmes towards bridging the digital divide among its citizens, as well as focusing on the creation of a talent pool that is in sync with the emerging requirements of the industry.

FutureSkills Prime, a joint initiative of MeitY and the National Association of Software and Service Companies offers 314 courses covering emerging technologies, professional skills and tools to which 1.2 million candidates have signed up so far.

The Chips-to-Start-up programme aims to train 85,000 chip designers at Bachelors, Masters and research levels to provide exposure of the entire chip design, fabrication and testing resources in a consolidated manner to students and start-ups.

Visvesvaraya PhD Scheme for Electronics & IT helps in enhancing the number of PhDs in electronics system design and manufacturing and IT/IT-enabled services sectors in the country for supporting research in emerging technology areas, such as semiconductor technologies, quantum technologies, AI, machine learning, and Big Data analytics.

Under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan, about 67 million candidates from rural areas have been enrolled and 57.6 million have completed training in digital literacy.

## Institutional coordination

Representing about 85 per cent of the world's gross domestic product and 75 per cent of global trade, the G20 has immense potential to set exemplary frameworks for macroeconomic policy issues.

A comprehensive digital skilling strategy for a global, digitally-capable workforce demands proactive institutional coordination.

From the exchange of best practices in national digital skilling strategies among member states to facilitating cooperation in emerging disruptive technologies, such coordination would ensure that all G20 economies, at least in terms of the digital capacities of workers, have similar opportunities to maximise the benefits of traditional and emerging digital technologies.

An enabling framework for member states to enter into mutual recognition of digital skills across is an important strategy in this context.

Harmonisation of skill standards across various technology- intensive job roles would provide a common language across the industry, academia, and governments to identify and describe the key areas of digital competence.

A common nodal point, in the form of a Centre of Excellence, which may act as a repository of best practices of member states and guide member states on mutual recognition of skills, is another step towards institutional coordination.

Such an institution may also provide G20 members with data-based analysis, insights, and contexts for progressive actions to enhance talent mobility on a collective and bilateral basis.

**The Way Ahead**

Inclusivity in the digital economy and the 'future of work' has been a recurring theme among G20 member states.

The current agenda in India's Presidency seeks to further this vision and build on discussions and progress made thus far.

The G20 has backed the adoption of a multi-stakeholder and human approach to innovation and emerging technologies in the past few years, underlining the importance of collaboration and responsible policies.

With the shift to digital economies and the 'future of work' changing faster today than ever, there is a need for the G20 states to not lose sight of the goal of inclusivity. A stronger commitment to cooperation is vital to ensure that economies maximise the gains from digital technologies.

**Conclusion**

With 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' being the theme of India's Presidency, the current G20 is an opportunity to reaffirm that commitment and make inclusivity an integral component of that future.

An enabling mechanism for sharing of best practices in digital skilling initiatives of member states, and guidelines on how a shared understanding of digital roles and digital skills may be reached will enhance talent mobility on a collective