

## IMPORTANCE OF RESKILLING AND UPSKILLING THE WORKFORCE

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to create the right opportunities for the workforce by the organizations to prepare themselves with required abilities in this age of modern technology which will bring tremendous benefits to both the employees and businesses in future. Making an investment on reskilling and upskilling is less than recruiting and training new workers. Reskilling or upskilling the workforce by an organization creates a fully developed, well-trained workforce, and enhances its employees' capabilities. It doesn't only increase the organization's income, but also improves retention. For the employees, at a time where technology is continuously improving and pushing for change in the workplace, it is more significant than ever to make sure that their present-day skills are relevant.

**Keywords:** reskilling, upskilling, workforce

### INTRODUCTION

This paper makes the organizations aware so that they help their employees see the path to career advancement in front of them, and get them excited about what could be next; and to ensure employees' skillsets won't become obsolete, boost morale and show that the employers care about their employees' careers and their futures.

Going by the exact definition depicted in the Cambridge dictionary, "reskill", essentially means "to learn new skills so that you can do a different job". If we talk about "Upskilling", the exact definition says that "to learn new skills or to teach workers new skills".

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Today, the corporate world is on the brink of an epochal transition. According to a recent McKinsey Global Institute report, more than 375 million workers may need to completely change their skill sets by the year 2030. This would happen because of newer technologies such as digitization, AI (artificial intelligence) and automation disrupting the world of work. As a result, a number of employees are focusing to pursue additional degrees and certifications in these technologies, either through self-finance or by taking loan for short term courses. So, how big is this challenge that can potentially change occupational skill sets? If we talk about numbers, this change would be akin to coping with the 20th-century shift from agriculture to manufacturing in Europe and North America. That said, things are about to change for the better, with several key corporate players increasingly investing in “reskilling” and “upskilling” their existing workforce. (Admin, 2018, Online)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In an age, when global business conditions impact the local business scenarios directly and instantly, it is natural to rethink about the business at hand, how to refine it and hence how to keep the workforce relevant. Getting the right talent is just one part of the story, another one is to make them productive, especially at times when the market conditions are unpredictable. For this, companies suggest Learning & Development programs but those seem insufficient on today’s conditions. Reskilling and upskilling is the name of the game. (Sharma, 2017, Online)

Reskilling has become a growth imperative for organizations, many of which have seen positions go unfilled for months or years for lack of the right talent to fill them. It’s become increasingly apparent that organizations in today’s tight talent market cannot depend solely on recruitment to find people for those roles. Low unemployment rates and tight labor markets for skilled workers in many countries have made it difficult to hire “ready-made” workers in a timely manner (it takes an average of 42 days to fill an open job today).

In the survey the respondents appear well aware of the major role learning must play in obtaining badly needed-skills. When asked the respondents how they will deal with issues of job redesign, more leaned toward training than toward hiring as a way to obtain the talent they need. Eighty-four percent also said that they were increasing their investment in reskilling programs, with 53 percent saying that they would increase this budget by 6 percent or more. And 77

percent of organizations are increasing their learning team's head count, elevating learning to the second-fastest-growing role in HR. (Woods, 2019, Online)

The global learning landscape is undergoing a tectonic shift beginning with higher education (e.g. premier US universities) in 2011/12 leading the way in making their programs available online, many of them without any fees attached. While distance and e-learning programs are not new, internet access and speed, ease of use and the learning experience for these programs seem to have improved dramatically in recent years. High resolution video clips can now be viewed with clarity and little lag, resulting in more options for curriculum designers to push innovative learning resources. Web2.0 has also contributed to more interactivity for the learners with many participating in collaborative projects and learning online. There is also the element of learner readiness. Given that many of the digital natives are now in their twenties and thirties, there is a critical mass of learners who are not just ready to embrace, but expect technology-assisted learning as part of their upskilling process. (Udemy and Dioworks, 2016, Online)

## MAIN SECTION

As organizations navigate this complex digital transformation, learning & development (L&D) leaders are tasked with keeping employees up to speed with the ever-evolving skills ecosystem. As organizations reskill their workforce to prepare for the future of work, personalization powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning will help drive what employees should learn next. Personalization, unified search, and recommendation engines are essential for effective content creation, according to Deloitte. (mentioned in Osborne 2018, Online). "In learning and development (L&D), contextualization is the art and science of delivering the right content in the right format for learning, development, and performance improvement at the right time." 10 Artificial intelligence and machine learning can contextualize content for learners by providing course recommendations based on user behavior.

New digital technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and automation tools are rapidly changing the way we work, develop products, and interact with customers. Intelligent automation tools augment what people do at work and will redefine what's possible. (Osborne, 2018, Online)

The recent trends will result in the redesign of almost every job, as well as new perspectives on workforce planning and the nature of work. Recent technological developments such as sensors, cyber-physical systems, the Internet of Things, smart networks and cognitive

computing have gone main stream along with the open talent economy. Companies can no longer consider their workforce the only employees on their balance sheet, but must also include freelancers and “gig economy” workers.

Together, these recent trends will result in the redesign of almost every job, as well as new perspectives on workforce planning and the nature of work.

A change is already under way: the organization is now in what is referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (‘Industry 4.0’), which will influence our working environments significantly. Some of the areas we can expect to see change will be in purchase, production, manufacturing, sales or maintenance, by including concepts such as smart manufacturing, smart maintenance, couples with a high degree of automation and integration in all enterprise processes. It will have far-reaching implications on business value creation, business models, downstream services and work allocation and organization. As a consequence, employees will be confronted with transformed work processes, new business models and new technologies. Due to the disruptive nature of emerging technologies and modified structures for communication and collaboration, the model of work organization that we know today will transform and continue to do so in the years to come. Processes will become increasingly interconnected and complex. The technical, organizational and social spheres of work activities will overlap.

Given the pace of change and the constant pressure to adapt, leaders have to invest significant time in building the organization of the future supplemented with ecosystems and networks to play support roles. Agility is crucial in the race to replace structural hierarchies with networks of teams empowered to take action. In this context, companies will have to continually help employees to adapt to changing paradigms. The concept of a traditional career is being shaken to its core, driving companies to provide continuous learning experiences that allow employees to build skills quickly, easily and on their own terms.

This transformation of the work environment will change job profiles and therefore require employees to be upskilled in a wide range of competencies. Practitioners and researchers agree that the key challenge lies in competency development for students and employees seeking jobs that require higher education.

A holistic competency development approach is required to meet the challenges in this era. These competencies can be divided into two broad categories: competencies that a company should master, and competencies that employees should adopt.

Continuous reskilling and upskilling not only requires a mastery of fundamental subjects but also 21st century inter-disciplinary themes such as global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, environmental literacy.

The Four C's critical to adapting to a work environment in the 21st century are:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication
- Collaboration

Hence, the skills of the future cannot be reduced to those simply involving technology. Self-driven individuals who display flexibility, accountability, social and cross-cultural skills will be able to navigate the organizations of the future. Some skills can be mastered quickly while others are more difficult and take longer to master, which is not only the function of the skill but also situational variables.

The conversation needs to shift to innovation, critical-thinking, creativity, civic engagement, social life - the full range of experiences that young people will be involved in in the future. (Jha, 2017, Online)

Does teachers' role change as days/months/years pass? Do teachers need to change their teaching style in order to connect better with their students? Though the role of the teacher does not change much, traditional teachers may find the modern classroom environment strange and the attitudes, learning styles and needs of Gen Z learners different. They will have to change their ways of teaching based on the needs and abilities of their students. "If you need knowledge, keep adding something new to your mind every day, but if you need wisdom keep deleting a few negative things from your mind every day." I don't know who authored this beautiful quote. It is very apt for the teaching community. Teachers need to update their knowledge and skills. If they fail to "upknowledge" and upskill, they may become obsolete.

Does technology make teachers obsolete? According to a report by McKinsey Global Institute, "more than 375 million workers may need to completely change their skill sets by the year 2030" because of newer technologies such as digitization, artificial intelligence and automation. As a result, a number of employees are required to possess new skill sets by re-skilling and upskilling them. This applies to the teaching community too.

Let us assume that a robot or any machine with artificial intelligence is able to perform better than a human teacher in a classroom or outside the classroom. It could be a scary situation that would give shivers to many teachers because they could lose their jobs. What would a teacher do in such a situation? Smart teachers might try to outsmart the robot and try to prove that they are indispensable and much more useful than the machine with artificial intelligence. There is a great possibility (some may call it “danger”) that artificial intelligence and machine learning may make teachers obsolete as some of the skills considered essential for decades have been made redundant today. Faced with such threats, in the days to come, many teachers may feel the need to learn new skills.

The terms up-skilling, re-skilling, downskilling are latest buzzwords at workplaces including industries and companies and soon these terms may become hot buzzwords in academia too. Every day we hear the advent of some new technologies which either positively or negatively impact our professions. Some technologies make people with certain (outdated) skills obsolete or downskill them and some technologies create an opportunity for teacher to learn new skills or upskill them.

All new technologies demand new skills. For example, those who are assigned to teach English or any foreign language in the language laboratory using technology are required to learn many new skills such as designing lessons using online resources, creating interactive exercises and online tests, and so on. (Rayan, 2018, Online)

No teacher wants to be labeled -“outdated” or “obsolete”. The moment teachers become outdated they cease to stay relevant and fail to connect with their students. Teachers who are outdated start feeling that they are unwanted and unfit to be teachers.

In order to connect with the students, the teachers need to keep themselves updated so that they can match up with the continuously evolving technology. The teachers will have to change their ways of teaching according to the needs and abilities of their students.

“If you need knowledge, keep adding something new to your mind every day, but if you need wisdom keep deleting negative things from your mind every day.”

At many organizations, employees are required to possess new skill sets by re-skilling and up-skilling themselves. This feature applies to the teaching community as well. Every day we hear the advent of some new technology which either positively or negatively affects our professions. The terms up-skilling, re-skilling, down-skilling are the latest buzzwords at workplaces including industries and companies and soon these terms may become hot buzzwords in

academia too. All new technologies demand new skills. What new skills do teachers need to learn in the digital age? (Sharma, 2019, Online)

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Although upskilling and reskilling are two completely different approaches, but can help define the career paths of employees. Depending on career aspirations, either one can certainly help move their careers along. Reskilling can help the employees recover from poor choices that they may have made in their education (for example, earlier focusing on software, but subsequently realizing that hardware was more suitable for them). In case, the employees don't feel like undergoing the same grind of pursuing a degree, they can opt for any short-term certification course (either self-financed or through a loan for short term/vocational courses) and upskill their current occupational skill sets. No matter what choice the employees make, always improve their existing skill levels by investing in further learning. For a financial support, the employees can approach any reliable education loan provider agency of their area. These agencies can provide them a number of options for a loan for their further higher studies, so that the employees can focus on their career without worrying about their financial crisis anymore. (Admin, 2018, Online)

A training program allows an employee to strengthen those skills that each one needs to improve. A development program brings all employees to a higher level so they all have similar skills and knowledge. This helps reduce any weak links within the company who rely heavily on others to complete basic work tasks. The training will give the employee a greater understanding of their responsibilities within their role, and in turn build their confidence. It improves employee satisfaction and morale – the investment in training that a company makes shows employees that they are valued. The training creates a supportive workplace.

L&D will drive the most significant transition in the workforce since the Industrial Revolution. This large-scale reskilling will be fueled by new technologies on the learning front. (Woods, 2019, Online)

Re-skilling builds an atmosphere where people can pay attention to jobs of different kind that demands thinking and creativity which helps an individual grow. The procedure may sound intimidating, but this is the only way to survive in this technologically evolving space. (Gulati, 2018, Online). Creating upskilling opportunities at your company isn't just smart, it's critical to the health and growth of your organization. Forward-thinking companies that consider

what the employees want their staff to learn and what training and development methods are best for their goals reap the benefits with employees who are better at their jobs, more motivated and more likely to remain with the company. (Half, 2018, Online). Together companies and employees can prepare the manpower for tomorrow.

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