

Digital Technologies essential to bridge India's skill gap: Accenture study

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New approaches to learning can help protect US\$1.97 trillion of economic growth at risk due to outdated skills



A new report from Accenture outlines an approach to bridging the skills gap that, if not addressed, could result in India forgoing as much as US\$1.97 trillion in gross domestic product (GDP) growth promised by investment in intelligent technologies over the next decade.

The report, "Fueling India's Skill Revolution," identifies the skills that are rising in importance across most job roles as intelligent technologies transform the nature of work. It notes that skills such as complex reasoning, creativity, and socio-emotional and sensory perception cannot be taught through traditional teaching and learning.

The report includes a framework that combines a suite of innovative learning methods grounded in neuroscience research to make skills development more effective, enabling organizations to reskill their people at scale while providing learning experiences that are more tailored to the individual.

The approach is based on Accenture's own 'New Skilling' framework which helped more than 160,000 Accenture employees around the world become conversant in the latest IT skills and more than 100,000 to be job-ready in less than two years. The framework supports the four stages of an individual's learning journey, which can be augmented by a combination of digital technologies:

Awareness: Digital platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) can help with content curation and dissemination to ensure that students are aware of the skills they need.

Conversant: AI-based adaptive programs can build specific pathways to tailor learning to individual needs.

Job-ready: Augmented and virtual-reality technologies can enable immersive training to make people job-ready.

Expert: Blockchain-based micro-credentials can help individuals stay on the path to lifelong learning and build deeper

expertise.

“Intelligent technologies increasingly require people to hone more exclusively human skills such as creativity, empathy and ethical judgment,” said Rekha M Menon, chairman and senior managing director at Accenture in India. “These skills cannot be acquired in the classroom. We must offer more experiential on-the-job training and help people adopt life-long learning as their jobs are transformed. Digital tools and applications — like artificial intelligence, analytics and blockchain — will be essential in delivering these new learning approaches.”

The report also recommends four actions that stakeholders in India — including government departments, industry bodies, academia, non-profit organizations and corporates — need to initiate to ensure that the country’s workforce has the skills needed for the digital economy.

Unify a fragmented ecosystem: Use digital platforms to connect the stakeholder ecosystem so that employers, education providers, start-ups and public agencies can work together to address skills demand, create jobs and tackle other challenges facing job seekers. Analytics could help identify the areas for intervention and recommend appropriate actions; and blockchain could improve the transparency and accountability of the process of awarding skills development grants.

Use blended learning models: Improve learning retention and ‘stickiness’ through blended learning formats that offer the optimal mix of in-person interaction, on-the-job learning and online learning.

Start at the source: Create a comprehensive skills-based learning path in schools and colleges and adapt curriculum in institutions of higher learning to cater to the broader needs of the digital economy.

Customize to the local context: Build technology solutions that can be applied at scale while being relevant to local needs. Ensure that digital solutions are affordable, device-agnostic, multi-lingual, and compatible with offline infrastructure.

“It’s critical that companies collaborate with the broader ecosystem to bridge the skills gap that is keeping India from harnessing its demographic advantage,” Menon said. “Organizations must recognize that they need to be innovative not just in developing products and services, but also in the way they offer learning opportunities that ensure their communities are ready for the future.”