

Manpower Development and Employability Challenges: An Exploratory Analysis of Nagpur Division

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Abstract: *The role of manpower development and employability has become one of the major deciding factors of the development of the economy of the region especially in the rapidly changing urban and semi-urban economy. This research paper aims to carry out exploratory analysis for man power development and skill deficit issues that are more in focus here are the changing needs of the labor markets and the availabilities of skill, education and employment in Nagpur Division. The study examines how well the opportunities for education and skill development are in place to meet the competency skills needed by the current industry and service provision, and will revisit this in the future to assess future needs. Lack of collaboration between industry and academia, practical and skill gaps, digital skills gaps, lack of career advice, skill attainment in college compared to job demand, unequal access to training are also mentioned. The Researchers used exploratory research method to gain an understanding of perceptions and experiences of the relevant actors towards employability and manpower development based on primary and secondary sources of information. The results revealed that Nagpur Division has huge scope for human-resource development but there is a substantial difference between the human-resource available with the division and the skills needed by the employers. Enlarging skill-development programmes and strengthening the bridge between industry and academia to facilitate the improvement of employability should thus be seen as complementing improving vocational and digital skills and industry-oriented education. As per the study, a coordinated effort of the institutions linked with education, industries, Government and the skills developing institutions is needed to ensure a sustainable human resource development in a true sense and for real jobs generation in Nagpur Division.*

Keywords: Manpower Development, Employability, Skill Development, Labour Market, Skill Gap, Employment Challenges, Human Resource Development, Industry–Academia Collaboration, Vocational Education, Digital Skills, Nagpur Division, Workforce Development, Employment Opportunities.

Introduction

The dimensions of manpower development and employability have gained more significance in present labour market scenario. Through fast industry change, advancement of technology, digitalisation, globalisation, and change in business models, nature and skills needed in the job market has significantly evolved. This shifting landscape presents a major problem for countries with large numbers of young people looking to sustain economic growth: the ability to sustain economic growth in this context depends on more than just a sizeable working age population. The quality, skills, adaptability, productivity and employability of human resource has become likewise important. The process of systematic development of human resource knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes and capabilities is called manpower development. Employability is the capacity to seek and to be offered and keep a position in which they have the opportunity to continue to develop and learn and includes the use of technical, occupational, interpersonal, digital and problem solving skills. Hence building manpower and employability skills are key to having a productive workforce that could address the changing needs of the economy for hire.

The Indian population too is large and diverse, and as such presents huge potential for economic growth. But employment, underemployment, skill gaps, lack of skills in vocational training and gaps between the qualifications of the students and industry needs remain issues in the country. A large percentage of youth are entering the workforce with pay, but without any of the necessary soft skills, technical skills, verbal skills, digital skills or preparing to work. Small and medium-sized employers are also increasingly seeking employees with multi-disciplinary skills, flexibility, technological energy, analytical skills, collaboration, and 'lifelong learning'. This results in a huge mismatch of the number of people trained and the number of trained persons being in demand. The increase has, thus, made skill development programmes and vocational education relevant in improving the quality of labour force and supported ease out of the transition from education to employment.

Maharashtra is playing an important role in various sectors of industries, commerce, financial and educational development and in service delivery in India. One good educational institution along with the presence of industries, service sector activities, public sector activities, information technology and beginning entrepreneurship brings lots of development potential in the Vidarbha region of the state when it has to do with human resource development. Nagpur Division which includes Nagpur, Wardha, Bhandara, Gondia, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli Districts is an important administrative and economic area of Vidarbha. Nagpur is one of the most important cities in terms of education, Logistics and Transport, banking/financial industry, healthcare, retail and IT services along with manufacturing. Agricultural, agro based Industries, Mining, Forest resource, Manufacturing, Tourist and Small and medium business activities also exist in the remaining districts. The growth of these results brings employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and at the same time demands a workforce with the skills suited for the changing economic activities.

Though, with the presence of educational institutions and skill development centers, there are a few employability challenges which can impact the utilization of manpower in the Nagpur

Division. They include mismatch between the curricula offered at school and in the workplace, insufficient work experience, inadequate exposure to cutting-edge technologies, insufficient information on digital skills, lack of soft skills, limited knowledge about career opportunities and the poor connection between academic institutions and employers. Other issues include access to quality education and training centres, transportation and access to Digital Infrastructure and employment information with rural and economically disadvantaged people may also face difficulties. Furthermore, the differences in jobs, employment opportunities that may be found within a particular region can lead to manpower utilization differences. Andrew Walker joined the social sector as a Learning Portfolio illustrator, following an extensive twelve-year IT career to meet the needs of the digital transformation, introduction of computers, AI technology and automation, which has increased the demand for continuously improving skills and reskilling.

The study tries to approach the matter in an exploratory manner for the development and employability problem of manpower in Nagpur Division in this background. The study aims are to understand the factors which determine the employability, identification of the skill gaps, existing mechanisms of manpower development and identifying the challenges faced by people during skill acquisition and utilization for employability. Also considers the role of cooperation between industry and academia, vocational education pathway, skill and digital literacy through guidance on career path selection and entrepreneurship development with a lifelong approach to enhance employment and livelihoods. The study focuses on a particular division – Nagpur Division – to provide a window to the regional aggregated landscape of the broader issue of preparedness of the workforce and their employability. The results will help develop the understanding of the needs of the evolving labour market and can be used to help develop the strategies for manpower development in the educational institutions and industries, training institutes and other stakeholders. In conclusion, the promotion of employability and creation of a highly skilled, agile and industry-ready workforce can play a vital role in generating employment, inclusive economic development, improving productivity and sustainable regional growth of Nagpur Division.

Literature Review

In the literature of knowledge, skill, competency and attitude of manpower development for employability as such, there is an increasing need for building work force by knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies which are relevant to the needs of the labour market and must also ease their attitude in order to bring the skills and competencies into the labour market. Manjunath Chenoy (2012) has researched on the potential of skill development India and has inferred that India has vast potential of human resources, which has to be tapped strategically through systematic interventions of skill trainings. It highlighted the importance of enhancing the quality and relevance of vocational and technical education and the linkages between training institutions and industry as some of the challenges to address. Similarly, FICCI (2010), and ICRA Management Consulting Services Limited (2010), have reported on the skill-development environment in India and identified the different gaps in the current skill-training landscape including low quality of skills, lack of infrastructure, poor rates of participation from the industry, non-existent skills certification processes, and poor outcomes

for employability. The report highlighted the need to provide training and come up with good skills that are useful in the jobs market.

Skill Development in India published by Ernst & Young and FICCI (2012) also included a discussion on the structural issues in the Indian skill-development eco-system. It noted that, with sectors require more skilled manpower, the overall training capacity need to be expanded and quality and relevance of training programmes improved hugely. The study also pointed out evidence of the need for establishing institutional mechanisms to enhance employability, for facilitating of public private partnerships and for the involvement of industry and the push for standardisation of training. The India Skills Report - presented by CII, Wheebox and PeopleStrong (2014) was also able to point out the skill gaps of project graduates and project employers. Communication skills, analytical skills, knowledge of work, computer skills and other work competencies also affected the employability in addition to educational qualifications, as suggested by the results. It is this perspective that will help to distinguish learning from work to ensure that a more differentiated context of formal learning and employability is developed.

Quality higher education linkage with employment has also been explored deeply. In Yorke's (2001) conceptualisation employability was considered to be a mix of achievement, skills, understandings and personal attributes that increase an individual's chance of entering and succeeding in the world of work. His career as much as his work helped to focus on jobs not as just a job as a person as managing their career, more responsively to the changing employment. There is a competency-based method of education quality assessment at higher level which Warn and Tranter (2001) recommend. They said a lot of emphasis was placed on the development of skills outside the academic realm, skills that have transferable quality to the work world. The latter is especially important in the current context given that employers increasingly are looking for students who are able to tie theory to the workplace environment.

The views of students and employers also have been examined with regards to skills needed to get a job. Chithra (2013) conducted studies of engineering students' and employer's perceptions of the employability skills. The study confirmed the importance of communication, technical skills, problem-solving abilities, teamwork and other generic skills for achieving the employability of graduates. The result indicates that there might be a gap between students and employers in competencies, meaning that there could be a perception gap and/or preparedness gap. In research related to the development and perception of importance of the generic skills, Wye and Liew (2005) conducted their research among undergraduates. Their role helped to highlight the importance and need for transferable skills to be developed in order to improve the employability of graduates, and species a clear signpost on the role of higher education institutions in systematically developing transferable skills.

Wye and Lim (2009) discuss the perception gap between the students and employers more specifically. They found that the employers and the undergraduates were not in total agreement on the importance of the different employability skills identified. These differentials can have important implications because the academic or technical qualification that is thought to be required for a given occupation might not be the employer's top priority. Thus, the emphasis on

the expectation of the employers while designing the curriculum and skill development programmes is reiterated.

Dhar, (2012) has studied about the concerns of employability of Management education students in Indian scenario. The study highlighted the gap between the contents taught in the management education and industrial requirements and emphasized to assign more importance to industry education and development in academic institutions which was found as a need of the hour to enhance the managerial skills and manager competencies. From industrial point of view following study was done by Gandhi, (2013) on “Employability Skills among management students in educational climate”, which deals on skills helpful for students to emerge victorious in their profession. Together these studies indicate that access to the world of work is not just dependent on students' academic qualifications, but it is also dependent on exposure to industry, student learning, student representation abilities, communication skills and problem solving skills.

Given the current globalized landscape, Jain (2013) has talked about challenges related to development of ‘employability skills’ while divergent roles were suggested for government programmes, the role of lifelong learning and extension departments. The study was able to highlight the need for more job competition due to globalization, thus highlighting the importance of lifelong learning and skill acquisition. Thus, employability must be seen as a process, as a capability and not as an end of formal education. Individuals need continual replenishment of knowledge and skills to accommodate the changes in technology and economy.

The literature reviewed confirms that the lack of skills, poor industry–academic linkages, lack of work experience, poor generic skills, rapidly changing technology and mismatch of industry expectations with the graduate skills are significant problems in employability. However, numerous existing projects focus on national-level skill development, engineering or management students or higher-level education institutions in general. Comparatively little empirical attention seems to have been given to the regional aspects of the manpower development and employment problems both in and outside the city, irrespective of the nature of the employment, both in urban and rural areas. In the backdrop of above gaps the present study attempts to fill the gap at a divisional level of Nagpur in terms of skill-development policies and needs, learning and training, engagement with the industry and deployment of a more specific style of creating employment opportunities.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the existing status of manpower development and employability in Nagpur Division.
- To identify the major skill gaps and employability challenges faced by job seekers, students, and the existing workforce in Nagpur Division.
- To assess the adequacy and effectiveness of existing education, vocational training, and skill-development programmes in preparing individuals for employment opportunities.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference in the major skill gaps and employability challenges faced by job seekers, students, and the existing workforce in Nagpur Division.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant difference in the major skill gaps and employability challenges faced by job seekers, students, and the existing workforce in Nagpur Division.

Research Methodology

Exploratory and Descriptive type of research design has been used in the present study to know about the problems prevailing in the Manpower Development of employability in Nagpur Division. The data in the study is classified in two data sources and classified primary – secondary. Primary data is gathered from selected respondents (students, job seekers, employees etc) through a structured questionnaire which has an appropriate likert scale. The secondary data collected from the books, research articles, skill development reports, government reports, institutional publications, etc. A sampling method was employed to choose a respondent to the study based on the purpose and scope of the study. The data gathered is represented, presented and analyzed descriptively and inferentially in statistical presentations. Descriptive Analysis: includes frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation. Appropriate statistical tests (Chi-square, ANOVA, non parametric testing) are used to look for differences/relationships between variables. Results analysis facilitates the knowledge about the main skill gap and non-work opportunities of the division as Nagpur which helps in establishing improvement plans for the manpower development.

Descriptive Statistics for Major Skill Gaps and Employability Challenges

Sr. No.	Skill Gap / Employability Challenge	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Lack of technical and job-specific skills	400	3.92	0.91	1
2	Inadequate practical/work experience	400	3.87	0.94	2
3	Lack of digital and technological skills	400	3.81	0.96	3
4	Inadequate communication skills	400	3.76	0.98	4
5	Lack of problem-solving and analytical skills	400	3.71	0.93	5
6	Limited industry–academia interaction	400	3.68	1.02	6
7	Lack of career guidance and counselling	400	3.63	1.04	7
8	Mismatch between educational qualification and job requirements	400	3.60	1.06	8
9	Limited access to quality skill-development programmes	400	3.55	1.08	9

Sr. No.	Skill Gap / Employability Challenge	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
10	Lack of awareness about employment opportunities	400	3.49	1.10	10

The Skill gap & employability issues were found to be good concern in the Nagpur Division with the help of Description analysis. The demands which gained the highest scores were lack of technical or job specific skills (3.92), lack of practical or work experience (3.87) and lack of digital and technological skills (3.81). The findings indicate that there is a large discrepancy between what people report that their own skills are and what skills are required in the current job market. Lack of problem solving and analytical skills (Mean = 3.71) and inadequate communication skills (Mean = 3.76) were also commented on as significant barriers of the employers. In addition, the interaction of the industry-academy is limited (Mean = 3.68), which could have an impact on the preparedness of the workforces. Limited access to quality programmes for skill development (Mean = 3.55), lack of awareness of employment opportunities (Mean = 3.49), career guidance (Mean = 3.63), mismatch between educational qualifications and job requirements (Mean = 3.60) were among other areas reported. There was evidence overall of consistently high mean scores suggesting that although educational qualifications are a factor there are some factors that affect employability. Based on the above results, there is a demand to introduce a practical training, creation of digitized skills, development of industry-oriented courses, career counselling, and increase the linkage between industry and academia in Nagpur Division. From the above descriptive analysis it can be inferred that there are significant differences between the problem/properties derived from the job seekers category and those derived from the existing job holders category but the problem/properties cannot be proven to be of a statistical nature and an appropriate inferential test needs to be applied to test the proposed hypothesis.

Chi-Square Tests

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.764	18	0.051
Likelihood Ratio	29.482	18	0.043
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.216	1	0.040
N of Valid Cases	400		

Chi-square test was used to determine if there was any significant association between Respondent category and skill gaps and employability aspect at Nagpur Division. The Asymp. The number of degrees of freedom = 18; Sig. of the results = .000; and Pearson Chi-square = 28.764. Sig. (2-sided) value of 0.051. As the calculated value of P (0.051) is slightly greater than the level of significance (0.05), the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. Again, there was no statistically significant association between the employability and skill deficit of the respondent and the respondent category. This indicates that among the employed population, student population and job seeker population have similar attitudes related to major challenges of employability in Nagpur Division. The results indicate

that technical skills not up to scratch, lack of practical experience, technical skills deficits and poor digital skills, communication skills and 'skills and experience are not required' are issues that apply to most of the groups of respondents. It is noticed that instead of the specific group of respondents, manpower development activities should be carried out with the paradigm of wide and comprehensive strategy.

Overall Conclusion

It is in the present study "Manpower Development and Employability Challenges: An Exploratory Analysis of Nagpur Division" which has concluded that "skill improvement or development of employable man power" is an important parameter to provide sustainable employment and sustainable economic uplift of the area. Even with the presence of education providers, training programs, and the expanding job market, it's evident that there is a gap between job related skills and the skills people have. Descriptive analysis revealed that employability issues faced are significant and include deficiencies in technical skills, job specific skills, lack of experience and direct exposure to work, digital skills, communication skills, problem solving skills and limitation of industry academia interaction. It was also found that there is a need of improvement in terms of academic qualification as the employers wish for increased knowledge, technology, adaptability, interpersonal skills, and being competent in the workplace.

The findings of Chi-square analysis reveal that there is no statistically relationship between the respondents' category and the skill gaps and employability challenges at 5% level of significance. This indicates that there are, in general, shared challenges to students, job applicants and current workers in relation to employability. In general the problem does not apply to a particular category, it becomes the manpower-development problem in the Nagpur division. Some recommendations suggested in the study advocated for an upgrading of vocational/technical education with an industry based curriculum, practicum and experiential learning, and a strong focus on increasing digital/soft skills preparation and counseling and job-awareness programs.

The study indicates some need for better collaboration between the industry and academia, continuous upskilling and reskilling of workforce, to access quality training, to possess entrepreneurship and for a better alignment of the needs of the workforce to the labour market in order to improve employability. It has been observed that a one-stop solution for strengthening these skills through human effort is necessary and should be put together, keeping in mind the collaboration among the Government, Schools/educational institutes, Industry and the Skill Development Organisation. Coordinated effort can play an important role to bridge the existing skill gap, augment the productivity of manpower, employment opportunity, inclusive and sustainable economic development in all over Nagpur division.

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