UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UPSKILLING, RESKILLING AND DESKILLING IN THE IT/ITES ORGANIZATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary world and the industry 4.0 is being referred to as "Human Centric" despite the technological disruptions that has propelled across globally. This era of 21st century believes in "Perform or Perish" subsequently we have seen the flourish of Organizations that has excelled and the burst of the others who have stagnated over a period of time. This paper is a systematic process of investigating into the impact of upskilling, reskilling and deskilling preferably in the IT/ITES Organizations and its repercussions of the business excellence in today's economy. The study is based out of Urban Bengaluru with a sample frame of IT industry where a FGD with L&D Team was conducted using a structured questionnaire. This paper addresses the specific area of learning and improvement to keep pace in the fast-moving changing ecosystem. The organizations today are on the cusp of change and it is very critical for the beneficiaries to inculcate a learning curve so as to sustain in the long run. The literature survey connects with the existing frameworks of learning model . The independent variable is upskilling, reskilling, deskilling and the dependent variable is the business excellence followed the moderating variable which is the processes involved. Thus, there is a direct relevance to the proposed research (Hart 2003) . A narrative literature review approach was adopted in this study by also looking into inclusion and exclusion criteria. The limitation of this study was the time constraint and the population gap apart from the scope for future empirical research. Apart from the findings, analysis and the recommendation. There is also the four-competency cluster model and skill adjacencies for skilling which is discussed. The author tries to introduce "future-skill reusable framework with skill grids, assessment tools and learning outcomes which can be used as a blue print to set decision criteria, to prioritize essential skills and to build a structural approach to evaluate and select training courses. This will help in capability building and immersion learning thus enabling upskilling, reskilling and deskilling approaches in the industry.

Key words: Business excellence, Upskilling, Re-skilling, Deskilling, Learning &development and Industry5.0

INTRODUCTION

The post-pandemic, 21st century workplace demands a new strategy for business across the globe. According to The Wall Street Journal, "The novel coronavirus pandemic led to a reworking of the economy unlike any other since World War II." This requires an innovative response from all the professionals in business, non-profits, government, and education. Strategies must address the facts head on. Considering the following data from different sources. ▪ 58 percent of the existing workforce needs new skill sets to do their jobs.1 ▪ 83 percent of industry association economists say employers in their sectors are finding it more difficult to fill jobs than they were five years ago.2 ▪ 55 percent of employees still struggle to find and share organizational knowledge and 61 percent are not completely satisfied with their company's workplace tools and technologies.3 ▪ Approximately 53 percent of college graduates are unemployed or working in a job that does not require a bachelor's degree.4

It is no wonder that a 2020 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends Report indicates that HR will need to change substantially or radically in its accountability over the next 12 to 18 months.5 Innovative strategies are needed in order to address these issues. New strategies should include previously under-explored options.

Most of the organizations are offering upskilling and reskilling opportunities to ensure employees to enhance their present job with new competencies or move into entirely new work. Upskilling is the process of learning new skills relevant to the present profession or employment while Reskilling is the acquisition of new talents unrelated to the existing position and both methods can improve, adaptability and versatility at work, which could help in improving the chances of getting a promotion.

Reskilling and upskilling are methods for ensuring employees with new skills or improving their existing ones in order to meet the changing needs of an organization. Upskilling and reskilling have obtained significant importance in the current context, likewise the recent technological improvements which has thoroughly changed the very nature of the workforce and the power-skills needed for success. (Sawant, 2022)

Upskilling and reskilling are important processes integrated for promoting professional development and advancement within an organization. Reskilling entails cultivating the staff with new abilities or technologies that are important to either their existing positions or open positions inside the company. On the other side upskilling relates to delivering   training or interventions that improves on their existing competencies thus increasing their capabilities and competencies in their present roles. (Cheryl, 2021).

A trending topic of research is the effectiveness of reskilling and upskilling on employee performance within a team or organization. Organizations can improvise employee performance and job satisfaction, as well as retention rates and recruitment costs, by inculcating the ROI in staff training and development. (Alfredo Díaz, 2020)

The Impact of reskilling and upskilling on the levels of productivity among the employees in an organization is a topic of growing interest and importance.

- This study aims to determine the extent to which employee learning and development and career advancement in organizations are influenced by reskilling and upskilling programs.

- The study will take a mixed method approach, gathering and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data.

An individual or a professional looking out for a promotion in the career may find reskilling and upskilling quite useful. Anyone can reveal that the company is committed to the cause of employee development and training initiatives to improve and sustain in the competing world of business; this can enhance the importance of an employee in the job market. (Li, 2022) It is important to keep in mind that reskilling and upskilling can occur in many different ways such as seminars, mentoring, coaching, on the job training, online courses, in person training, and on-the-go training. The strategy used will be determined by the organizations requirement, available resources, and the accurate skills and expertise that are being sought for those looking for a promotion. The reskilling and upskilling processes can offer a variety of advantages such as improved professional satisfaction, more job stability, and higher earning potential.

LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY WITH RESEARCH GAP

According to Deloitte Insights, "employees rate the 'opportunity to learn' as among their top reasons for taking a job and 94 percent say they would stay in a company if it helped them to develop, yet only 15 percent can access learning directly related to their jobs."6.

The statistics must have an impact on skill building initiatives and thus providing learning and development strategies. The workforce is being transformed and greater access to new skills and knowledge is being facilitated by the Industry 4.0, resulting in a revolution of industrial processes and a significant impact on globalization.

According to the world Economic Forum, training initiatives will be needed for 50% of all workers by 2025 due to the adoption of new technologies. Over two-thirds of the abilities that are necessary in today's work needs will change in five years. In 2025, a third of the

necessary talents will be technology-related skills that are not seen as being viral to today's employment requirements.

Here the study focuses on the concept of upskilling and reskilling of the workforce in the era of Industry 4.0 and beyond. (Li, 2022). Reskilling of humans is considered a key factor in assisting the company and its employees to achieve inclusive growth and sustainability. The pace of technological development cannot slow-down in the current set up. In today's context without digitization, automation, and artificial intelligence which are the primary drivers of growth for entire economy.

According to the opinion presented in this article, to ensure that the workforce has the necessary skills for the future, the reskilling or upskilling of their existing employees should be adopted by the organization. If they want to remain competitive in the market, greater investments in training and development must be made by the company or its personnel. New skillsets can be leveraged by employees irrespective of their tasks and designations, thanks to cusps of changes in the fast paced environment. The use of entirely digital methods to replicate the best aspects of in-person learning has been expedited by COVID-19 through live video and social sharing. More cost-effective scaling of learning initiatives is enabled by this change and better personalization of leaners, which in turn increases efficacy.

Conditions that are changing quickly must be adapted to by every industry's workforce, and new jobs and activities must be matched by business with those individuals. Leaders who can reskill and upskill the workforce will deliver new business models in the post-pandemic period. (Sapna Agrawal, 2020) The rapid evolution of emerging digital technologies, including IoT, AI/ML, data analytics, and cloud technologies, is impacting the labour market. As new technologies flourish, finding qualified employees becomes more difficult for businesses. This study's main goal was to investigate the results of training, a psychological intervention designed to encourage co-workers. Reskilling and upskilling programmes have evolved to counter the effects of crises, greater competitiveness, and labour market impact caused by different advancements across the business.

Choosing professional routes and appropriate upskilling choices is currently regarded as a difficult and time-consuming activity because information on continuing education is widely dispersed across websites. A researcher had gathered educational programmes from 488 providers and use contextualization, entity recognition, and entity linking techniques to extract knowledge about entities like requirements, skills, learning objectives, and course material. Then, slot filling incorporates these items into a sizable knowledge network with

approximately 734,000 edges and about 74,000 nodes. (Weichsel Braun, 2022) Offering free or inexpensive, high-quality online courses to anyone anywhere and removing the barriers of traditional education's cost, location, and access are two ways that educational social entrepreneurs who offer massive open online courses (MOOCs)

In yet another study the author had interviewed around 20 experienced professionals at multinational corporations (MNCs) in the information technology sector in India to establish the core skills regarded critical for employee upskilling. (Varma, 2021) This survey study represents the collective efforts of ten development partners in an attempt to throw light on the impact of the pandemic on employee, apprentice, intern, and trainee training and development from the perspective of enterprises and organisations.

To improve the agility and resilience of societies to deal with the challenges posed by pandemics and crises in the future, governments must ensure the continuation of workplace training and development, as well as improve the effectiveness of skills development and lifelong learning systems. Given the enormous disruption to skill development initiatives caused by the pandemic, it was decided to conduct a global online poll to assess the impact of the COVID-19 issue. (Cheryl, 2021)

Upskilling refers to integrating existing skills with new or significantly enhanced knowledge or skills to enable individuals to continue and succeed in the same profession or field of work, whereas reskilling implies helping individuals gain new knowledge or skills to enable them to perform new jobs or enter new professions (Bringer & Masino, 2021). The disruptions of the 4IR developments continue to reshape the type of skills required in the digital labour markets. Some scholars maintain that industries experiencing such disruptions are likely to develop skills initiatives as a classic response (Bajpai & Bierman, 2019). Considering the need for employees to be equipped to thrive during technological disruptions (Van Duerson & Van Dijk, 2014), organisations need to invest more in training their workers to help them acquire knowledge and skills to perform new tasks with long-term career opportunities during the 4IR (Eccles & Serafin, 2017). Similarly, Gibe (2019) highlights "a need to augment existing skills with new or significantly enhanced knowledge or skills to enable individuals to continue and succeed in the same profession or field of work or to move on to new positions" (p. 5). Therefore, upskilling and reskilling are critical initiatives for sustainability and continuity during the 4IR.

One challenge HR practitioners faced during and after the pandemic was upskilling and reskilling the workforce to thrive in the new context of remote working (Durai & Jose, 2022).

Since the onset of the pandemic, organisations have not been able to depend on the skillset they relied on in the past years. Organisations have had to find ways of continually developing their workforce by equipping them with in-demand skills. Durai and Jose (2022) posit that the shift of learning and development in the post-pandemic era entails aspects such as a liquid workforce, optimal learning, remote working, hybrid learning, social learning, virtual learning, and lifelong learning. Therefore, in the post-pandemic era, continuous upskilling and reskilling are key to surviving and thriving amidst constant and uncertain changes. Moreover, Raimi (2021) suggested that career reinvention in the post-pandemic era requires collaborative efforts from key stakeholders (such as governments, employees, and business organisations).

Researchers have predicted that technological advancements of the 4IR will be the key drivers of opportunities for new growth and the need for upskilling and reskilling. The Future of Jobs Report 2018 (World Economic Forum, 2018) shows that automation, AI, ubiquitous high-speed mobile internet, cloud technology, and widespread adoption of big data analytics will dominate as positive drivers of business growth. Hall (2023) maintains that "as market circumstances, technologies, and organisational requirements evolve, in-demand skills will do the same. Throughout history, forces such as globalisation, liberalization have changed most employees' jobs. Technology, including AI, stands to revolutionise those positions even more" (para. 1). Hall (2023) also posits that shifts in talent needs amidst rapid changes drive organisations to upskill and reskill their employees so as to handle dynamic developments. Moreover, the current business environment's and the VUCA world (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) force organisations to adopt various upskilling and reskilling strategies to survive or thrive in the present and prepare for the future (Sinha & Sinha, 2020). As stated earlier, people are the most essential assets of an organisation. Hence, for any upskilling and reskilling initiative to be successful, organisations need a skilled and empowered workforce (Vroman & Denko, 2022). Low, the vice president of human resources at Cengage Group (as cited in Vroman & Denko, 2022), maintained that "employees want to be aware of future career opportunities, and what kind of skills, competencies, and capabilities they need to get at the threshold of better career" (para. 3). Therefore, empowered employees can be critical enablers of the upskilling and reskilling initiatives as they will own such programs for their career development. Besides an empowered workforce, internal networks (connections) and policies are fundamental for upskilling and reskilling (Schaad, 2020). According to a study by the Centre for Creative Leadership, the 70-20-10 Rule for Leadership Development, "most learning happens through challenging experiences and assignments" (para. 2). Hence, ensuring

a culture of learning and growth through favourable internal networks and policies can enable employees to upskill and reskill continually. Besides internal networks, strategic external partnerships with resourceful organisations are equally beneficial (Hammer, 2022). Moreover, using technology can enable stronger internal and external networks for learning and development (Hammer, 2022).

Learning institutions are also instrumental in ensuring that upskilling and reskilling are integrated across. Many studies have suggested that education ecosystems should be designed to meet the future needs of the industry (Norden & Norman, 2018). Norden and Norman (2018) posit that to combat the impact of AI and robots, institutions of learning should design curriculums that the 4IR introduces the technologies in teaching and learning so that learners are kept on the familiarity zone and are exposed to such with technologies right from the beginning. likewise, Zahedi (2020) has proposed that higher institutions of learning can curate standard skills frame/ future ready competencies by collaborating with the industry to develop an industry ready cluster of competencies.

LEARNING MODEL: Sense-response framework

Organisational Sense-response Framework: The sensing and response dimensions heavily affect the change process (Žitkienė & Deksnys, 2018). A driver for organisational change often occurs from the external environment. For instance, a shift in customer preferences, competitive conduct, or industry developments can impact a firm externally. To capitalise on these changes and turn them into opportunities, companies must first identify and acknowledge them. This capacity or act of recognising heavily relies on an organisation's capabilities, people skills, experience, and expertise. The sense-response framework , proposed by Žitkienė and Deksnys (2018), lists the sensing ability (sub-process) as the first phase. Once external threats or opportunities have been identified, the organisation must determine how well it can adapt to these changes, including whether they are relevant to its current situation and long-term strategic objectives, whether they could be advantageous to it, and whether it is capable of taking action to address them. A second sub-process in the sense-response framework is the capacity to use organisational resources (capabilities and enablers) from both inside and outside the organisation in response to environmental changes (Žitkienė & Deksnys, 2018). The capabilities and enablers of the organisation heavily influence its reaction or response. An organisation uses its capabilities and enablers to respond to the opportunity or threat after choosing to act in response to an external change. Based on the sense-response framework, the foundation of a successful organisation is this intricate process of evaluating

and taking appropriate action in response to external changes. Although this framework has been used to study organisational agility, it can be adapted to studies on upskilling and reskilling for a VUCA world characterised by rapid, unpredictable changes in the external environment (such as technology, competition, customer needs and wants, labour market, and employee needs, etc.) that require organisations to constantly sense and keep track of changes and respond to them accordingly.
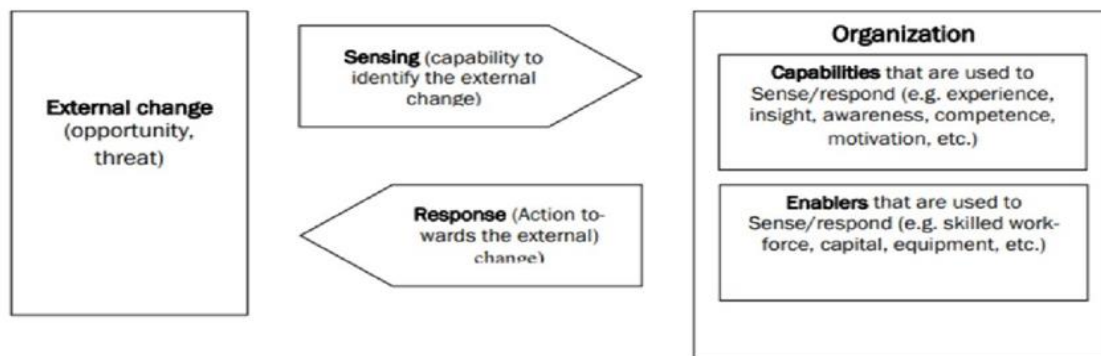

Fig (1) : The Original Sense Response Framework

This learning model is used here to relate to the changing landscape of business and the need to upskill, reskill, multiskilling, deskill and micro skill etc. The changing dynamics ensures that the employees in the organisation sense the response and get updated for sustaining in the ecosystem in the long run.

RESEARCH GAP:

Most of the study that are available now are mainly focused on how the upskilling and reskilling of employees have been led to the promotion of employees pertaining to the reskilling or upskilling programs that will be provided by the organizations to the employee's development and talent retention. However, very few studies have been conducted in terms of enhancing the employability perspective and the importance of micro skill, multi skill, deskill etc is not discussed much.

This study has a limitation of time, population and sector (only IT/ITES)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Reskilling and upskilling of employees do not always lead to development of an individual. This is because upskilling and reskilling can't always be an effective way to improve an employee's skill and knowledge thereby leading to Organizational development or benchmarking of process and policy always.

OBJECTIVES/AIM

1. To examine the perception of the L&D team towards upskilling and reskilling

2. To identify the factors influencing employability in the industry

3. To explore the overall perception of the industry towards job readiness factors and skill development

4. To analyse the impact of interventions used in the learning and development area

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H0: upskilling and reskilling initiatives don't have an effect on employee development

H1: upskilling and reskilling has an effect on the employee development in the organization

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

• Identification of the challenges faced by organizations in implementing reskilling and upskilling programs and recommendations for addressing these challenges.

• The evaluations on the impact of reskilling and upskilling programs on the retention rates of employees.

• Examination of the factors that contributes to the success of employee promotion, that includes job performance, experience and training.

• Comparison on the effectiveness of various types of training programs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology was through a structured focal group discussion using a questionnaire. The interview was conducted in IT/ITES Organization with the L&D Managers team.

KEY INSIGHTS INTO THE UPSKILLING & RESKILLING INITIATIVES

This Focal Group discussion focused on how L&D leaders are equipping employees to navigate a challenging business landscape, and the uncertainties ahead. These were some of the key findings.

Finding #1 –Skill development programs are crucial for most organizations.

Upskilling and reskilling initiatives, as well as leadership development, are the most widely offered skill-building opportunities.

The Team recognized the need for employee skill-development initiatives. They emphasized that such programs are a critical priority and their companies were already offering these opportunities.

Finding #2 –Talent retention is the top reason for investment in upskilling and reskilling

Investment in skill-building and employee development also significantly impacts employee retention. Providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities is critical for short- and-long-term

performance, such programs enhanced productivity and improved employee engagement thus retaining talent

Finding #3 –L&D team perceive that there were barriers in offering upskilling and reskilling opportunities in their organizations.

Those in different industries express widely divergent views. The team see multiple roadblocks impeding their ability to offer upskilling and reskilling initiatives. The resistance to change from employees, they also point lack of time , lack of budget, difficulty for employees etc

Finding #4 –Leaders cite a wide range of methods for delivering upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

Mentorship programs are the most common approach. HR leaders offer skill-building opportunities through a variety of channels, including peer coaching , self-study , embedding skill development on the job , simulations , and job rotation . The most common approach, by far, is mentorship programs

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Assess how well employee skills meet company objectives. Where are the strengths and gaps?

2. Align your upskilling and reskilling strategies to the most important business goals in your company.

3. Analyse, prioritize, and thoughtfully address barriers. Measure progress along the way to ensure you're moving the dial.

4. Pinpoint the best methods for delivering upskilling and reskilling opportunities based on your technology, readiness, and culture.

COMPETENCY CLUSTER MODEL or Future Skill reusable framework (proposed by the Author)

COGNITIVE: Think & Solve

INTERPERSONAL: Communicate & Collaborate

SELF LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL PRESENCE: Lead & Connect

The above-mentioned framework works on four dimensions of cognitive, interpersonal, self -leadership and digital presence. Each of the dimension connects to habits like "thinking, solving, communicating, collaborating , leading and connecting" these in turn leads to a repository of skill sets like "Logical thinking, design thinking, decoding others, people skills, leading from within and being adaptive and agile.

SCOPE: There is a scope for empirical study of the paper and validating the proposed model and testing it for the reliability.

CONCLUSION:

The need to update and grow is just not a trend but the question of survival strategies and the globally the concept of upskilling, reskilling, micro skilling, deskilling and many more initiatives are integrated so as to ensure there is employee development. This is a pilot study and the focal group discussion is only cross-sectional. This can be taken ahead as an empirical study in future to understand the importance of learning and development.

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