

RESPONSIVE SKILL TRAINING FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR GLOBAL ECONOMIC SETTING

Ijwo Joel Ega^{1*}, Adekola Yunisha Adekola (PhD)² and Oluwalowo, Idowu, I.³

¹Department of Building Technology, School of Technical Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

²Department of Electrical/Electronic, School of Technical Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

³Department of Woodwork, School of Technical Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

*Corresponding Email: egasaves@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The world is currently undergoing a Fourth Industrial Revolution attributable to technological changes. The skills that have expressly driven economic development in the past, like agriculture and manufacturing, are losing their place, and the employment of the future will be determined by technology, which will demand more technically skilled personnel than ever. The current article examines the need for responsive skill training and essentially identified both hard and soft skills for future jobs such as; problem-solving, critical thinking, artificial intelligence specialization and creativity. It also discusses the roles of training institutions, government, individuals and employers for these essential skills that are high in demand. It concluded that, for employability and sustainability of the future employees should possess both soft and hard skills. Consequently, it is essential to change the narrative by not just giving attention to hard skills but also to soft skill training. To achieve these, the stakeholders (both trainers and trainees) should adequately play their roles to ensure a seamless empowerment of the citizens through the necessary skills in order to be globally useful in the economic development.

Keywords; Skill Training, Employability, Sustainability, Economic Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Skill training is the means by which ideas and skills are transferred from one person to another (Ega, 2024). The current global challenges necessitate tailored training for specific skills or

professions across diverse existing and emerging job roles. A skill or profession where there is a lack of trained manpower suffers, but when there are no corresponding jobs for the trained personnel, unemployment becomes the order of the day, as is the case in Nigeria. Therefore, responsive skill training for employability is imperative in the face of the present economic challenges. More so that some existing skills are becoming obsolete globally due to the emerging technologies (Somanathan, 2024). Machines and robots are gradually taking over some jobs previously handled by human (Smith & Kemmis, 2013).

Thus, skills can be obsolete if machine replaces human so, the need for new skills and/or upskilling. To do this, the training institutions have critical roles to play; ready to identify and have informed knowledge about the current and future development. The lack or irrelevant skills training in Africa is the major reason for the general unemployment (Ega & Ega, 2023). Ordinarily, skill training should be tailored towards job needs otherwise random training will always lead to unemployment.

Most countries today not only need advanced technical and vocational skills, but also a flexible workforce that can adjust to rapid shifts in demand. Thus, investing in skills is so vital to a country's economic growth and competitiveness (World Bank, 2006). Specifically, education systems must be concerned with producing youths who have both strong foundational skills and specific skills for jobs. The demand for job-specific skills has been growing around the world and

Employers are also demanding that new hires have both technical and "soft" skills (Somanathan, 2024).

In India, for instance, in 2022 the Government launched a comprehensive reform aiming skills training for 400 million workers and similar trends in other countries in the region, as well as in many developed and developing countries around the world (Somanathan, 2024). Economic

growth has been accompanied by a shift from agriculture to the higher-value-added industrial and service sectors. People employed in these sectors—as machine operators, technicians, craftspeople, sales personnel, professionals, and managers—need different skills and more education and training than those in a predominantly agricultural economy. Hence the focus of this article is to examine the need for responsive skill training, identifying the areas for skill training and discuss the role of the government and the training institutions.

NEED FOR RESPONSIVE SKILL TRAINING

The World Economic Forum presented a plan to provide one billion people with better education, skills, and jobs by 2030 (Somanathan, 2024). They launched a program called the Reskilling Revolution, helping governments, the public sector, and businesses to achieve those ambitious goals (Towers, 2021). The main drivers behind this need for skilling, up-skilling and reskilling the workforce are presented as;

Emerging new business models & workplace transformation

The global pandemic has had a huge impact on the way work is done. Also other factors like an increasing focus on diversity, inclusion, and sustainability fast-tracked the rise of new business models and the need for transforming the workplace. As existing business models are restructured, new business models emerge (Towers, 2021). Thus, the dynamics of skills needed in the global setting requires responsive policy and training to catch up with the technological advancement and economy requirements. Workers must be able to adjust not only to domestic shifts in demand but also to what is happening in the global economy and labor market (Marr, 2024).

Business models and the very nature of work are also constantly transforming. This means that new skills are constantly emerging, and existing ones are evolving (Somanathan, 2024)

Bridging the skills gap

The mismatch between available and required skills and talents within the organization is a driver to the changes in skills. Before now, skills were valid for about five years, but nowadays many

skills are outdated after only two years: so, employees lack the skills they need to continue to do their jobs well. Closing that talent gap is critical to an organization's success (Towers, 2021). With the right skills in the workforce, businesses can be more productive and competitive; and the economy can grow faster, creating more and better jobs (Dar, 2016). Effectively skilling the workforce will enhance productivity and growth. The quality and supply of skilled technicians can be a significant constraint to the company growth, after power supply and taxes (Somanathan, 2024).

The need for self-actualization and adapting to a changing world

Happiness, learning new skills and growing in a certain direction plays an important role. It is an essential part of the self-actualization needs that all humans have. Besides the need for growth, and adapting to a changing world, create career opportunities, and contribute to an innovative, inclusive and sustainable working environment needs keeping on developing self and master a number of future proof skills (Towers, 2024). Skills are essential both to reduce poverty and to improve personal well-being. There is international evidence that cognitive, social, and technical skills affect wage premiums, earnings, and employment and occupation status (Dar, 2016). According to Ega and Ega (2023) skill is the means by which job opportunities are viewed. With the right skills, workers will have a better chance of being employed, or being well-equipped to set up their own business and in turn create jobs for other (Somanathan, 2024). Developing highdemand skills is essential to staying ahead of the curve, negotiating better pay, and building a career on your terms (Somanathan, 2024).

Digital and technological transformation

As we are entering a fourth industrial revolution, it will change the way we live, work, and interact with each other which is fundamentally enabled by unparalleled technological developments (Somanathan, 2024). Thus, there is a strong need to develop skills in line with the advancement and upskilling and reskilling of employees as their jobs increasingly involve the use of these disruptive technologies (Towers, 2021). The usual skills or trades may no longer be useful or the

demand for such skills may be low in the future (OECD, 2017). The use of machine robot, computer and internet are examples of the few advancements in technology creating demand for new skills.

NEW AREAS FOR SKILL TRAINING

Employers are looking for people with both hard and soft skills that can fit into their organization (Somanathan, 2024). Therefore, continuing training of young men in old less demand skills will be a mismatch. Table 1 shows soft skills and Table 2 technical skills that are in high demand (Dar, 2016). Mastering these skills will command a premium salary, enjoy certain perks, and have a fulfilling and financially rewarding career (Somanathan, 2024). While technical skills form the backbone of many roles, soft skills are equally crucial for career success, especially when

considering a career change or growth. These interpersonal abilities can set one apart in the professional world. For career advancement in today's technology-driven world, it is helpful to have a solid foundation in technical skills (Dar, 2016). Here are some of the most sought-after expertise areas that one can develop: note that these skills are in high demand because currently there are few experts in those areas.

Table 1: Soft skills that are in high demand

S/N	SKILL	DESCRIPTION
1	Leadership	Bringing the best out of other people and making sure they can thrive. Inspiring and guiding teams toward achieving common goals while making decisions and solving problems effectively.
2	Problem-solving	Identifying issues, analysing information, and developing creative solutions.
3	Critical thinking	Analysing information objectively, evaluating evidence, and making informed decisions.(analysing issues and situations based on evidence)
4	Communication	Effectively conveying ideas and information both verbally and in writing and actively listening to others.

5	Emotional Intelligence	Understanding and managing emotions, building solid relationships, and empathizing with others. Ability to acknowledge, express and control one's emotions.
6	Creativity	Generating new and innovative ideas, thinking outside the box, and finding unique solutions - new problem-solving ideas and make things better.
7	Teamwork	Collaborating effectively with others, building trust, and contributing to a positive team environment- a team play with variety of colleagues and coworkers.
8	Time management	Prioritizing tasks, setting goals, and effectively managing workload to meet deadlines - working smarter rather than harder.
9	Negotiation	Reaching mutually beneficial agreements through effective communication and problem-solving.
10	Adaptability	Adjusting to change, embracing new challenges, and learning new skills quickly - open-minded, curious, and willing to learn new things.
11	Curiosity and Continuous Learning	Adopt a growth mindset and desire to learn. Keep one's skills sharp and to the major changes. Stay relevant with the best chance of building a successful, fulfilling life.

Source; Somanathan (2024): Towers (2021): Marr (2024).

Table 2: Technical skills in high demand

	SKILL	DESCRIPTION
13	Project management	Using skills like scheduling, resource allocation, and risk management for planning, organising, and leading projects to achieve specific goals within time and budget.
14	Artificial intelligence specialization	Developing intelligent systems capable of learning and making decisions, and it involves machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, and computer vision.
15	Medical sciences	Using medical knowledge to diagnose health challenges, care for patients, carry out laboratory investigations and prescribe drugs for patients.
16	Business analysis	Identifying business needs and recommending solutions through data analysis, process improvement, and requirements gathering

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| 17 | Cyber security | Protecting computer systems and networks from cyber-attacks; this requires knowledge of network security, cryptography, ethical hacking, and security tools like firewalls and intrusion detection systems |
| 18 | Digital literacy | Effectively using technology for communication, research, and problem-solving; this includes proficiency in various software applications and online platforms |
| 19 | Data analysis | Extracting meaningful insights from large datasets using statistical tools and programming languages like Python or R; skills include data cleaning, exploration, visualization, and modeling |
| 20 | Database management | Designing, creating, and managing databases to store and retrieve information efficiently. This involves SQL, database modeling, and performance optimization |
| 21 | Python programming | A versatile language for various applications, including data science, web development, and automation; proficiency in core Python concepts, libraries (NumPy, Pandas). |
| 22 | Digital marketing | Promoting products or services online through various channels like SEO, social media, and email marketing, with a pinch of product management skills like understanding marketing analytics, customer behavior, and digital advertising platforms |
| 23 | Cloud computing expertise: | Using cloud platforms (AWS, Azure, GCP) to store, manage, and process data efficiently, including key skills like-infrastructure as code, cloud security, and platform-specific services |
| 24 | Data visualization | Creating visual representations of data to communicate insights effectively using tools such as Tableau, Power BI, or Python libraries (Matplotlib, Seaborn) |
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Source; Somanathan (2024): Towers (2021): Marr (2024).

ROLES OF TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

The need to keep updating the existing course content while introducing new ones that are emerging skill in demand. The implication of this is that the institutions are to work with the existing industries to develop framework for the emerging needs of industry (World Bank, 2006). The usual course contents may not be relevant in the future more so, there are personal and interpersonal skills or qualities that are very essential for employment.

The training institution should as well begin to initiate character moulding and leadership skills into the training curricula (Ega, Oluolowo, & Giwa, (2024). Critical thinking and problem-solving skills should rather be emphasized than the usual skills of ability to recall or rehearse scenario. Ability to work with anyone and everyone, adapt to any condition of work is also very important.

It is important to note that some of these skills may not be available in public or in private training institutions, but individualized training or apprenticeship where mentoring and individual teaching can be done. There are other skills that can be acquired through online training especially up skilling and reskilling programmes.

ROLES OF THE GOVERNMENT

Skills supply in any country is determined by the availability, quality, and relevance of skills development programs and by policy interventions that affect their management, governance, and financing. Thus, the roles of the Government is critical in setting out regulations, standards, and selective financing of skills development. This can explore innovative public-private partnerships industry-driven system for competency-based training and standard setting, and developing a clear articulation between various levels of education (Dar, 2016). This require a close coordination between government, the private sector and training providers to ensure a smooth training programme

To adequately train youths on the relevant skills, it is necessary to; begin early, in the first few years of life; as well as introduce literacy and soft skill development modules in schools. Introducing modules focused on literacy and soft skills as part of basic and secondary education and training programs can also help break the vicious circle of the unskilled being trapped in jobs that require fewer skills, and establish accessible pathways for acquiring skills.

ROLES OF INDIVIDUALS

Individuals have critical roles to play. They are to take decisions on the skill to acquire whether fresh skill, to up-skill or reskill. To do this effectively the individuals need to identify the soft skills needed and get trained. Soft skill training is majorly a self-training skill and the individual need to first realize that she/he lack the skill and then begin to train personality. The individual should also be able to identify personal ability and the hard skill of interest before going for training. It is also important to start early to avoid distractions. Again, the individual need to seek the right institution, organisation or individuals that can adequately provide the training. It is important to know that most hard skills are better acquired through apprenticeship.

ROLES OF EMPLOYERS

Employers need to have an important voice in the policy level and be involved in decision making at the institutional level. Government only cannot provide cost-effective skill training therefore, the need to team up with employer associations to support a system focused on delivering demand driven training that responds to the needs of employers. Feedback from the programmes, should be sent to policymakers so that they can make informed decisions about improving the design and implementation of programs.

CONCLUSION

The world is changing at an implausible pace and so it has been argued that the world is currently experiencing a Fourth Industrial Revolution. The skills that have expressly driven economic development in the past, like agriculture and manufacturing, are waning and the employments of the future will be ever more technology driven, demanding higher-skilled personnel. To this end anyone considering self-useful for future engagement in these jobs need both soft and hard skills.

Besides, it is already acknowledged that there are skill gaps currently due to emerging technologies and so training is needed in those areas. Therefore, tailored training is quite necessary to fill these gaps. To do this there are several roles to be played by individuals, training institutions and the government to ensure the citizens are economically empowered through skills in order to be useful in the economic development.

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