

What India's New Skilling Blueprint Actually Says

NITI Aayog has published *Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047*. We read all 103 pages. Here is the diagnosis, the reform architecture, and what it means for anyone building a career in digital marketing.

5

Structural barriers found across every learner segment

5 + 4

Core reforms and system enablers proposed

~60 Cr

Citizens covered by the report's segmentation



An aFactor reading of a public policy document

Source: NITI Aayog (August 2026), *Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047*, 103 pp.

Published 25 August 2026

Why We Read It, and Why It Matters

In August 2026, NITI Aayog released *Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047*. It is not a scheme announcement. It is a structural diagnosis of why India's skilling system produces enrolment without capability — and a blueprint for what should replace it.

We read it in full because it is the most rigorous public account we have seen of the problem we work on every day: the distance between what people are taught and what industry actually requires. The report is built on the MSDE *State of Skills Survey 2024*, PLFS 2023–24, AISHE, UDISE+ and the Economic Survey 2024–25, supplemented by roughly 4,000 survey respondents, 60-plus in-depth interviews and 100-plus industry conversations, and benchmarked against Germany, Australia, Indonesia and Singapore. Boston Consulting Group was the knowledge partner.

It also has consequences. The report is the intellectual base for the **Integrated Scheme in Skilling Architecture (ISSA)**, announced in Union Budget 2026–27, with State Skills Transformation Pilots in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam. What it argues will shape how skilling is funded, credentialed and hired against for years.

This document is our summary and our reading. It is presented in four parts: **the problems the report identifies, the solutions it proposes, how those map to what we are building in digital marketing, and an honest assessment of how aligned we currently are.**

India's ambition of Viksit Bharat 2047 depends on enabling citizens to learn, earn, and advance continuously.

NITI Aayog, Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047, Executive Summary

THE SCALE OF WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN ATTEMPTED

₹34,000 Cr

Allocated to skilling across Central Ministries, FY 2025-26

7.67 Cr

Individuals formally skilled since 2014-15

8.25%

Graduates working in roles aligned to their qualification

Those three numbers, side by side, are the report in miniature. Enormous investment. Enormous reach. And an outcome gap that investment and reach have not closed. The report's own verdict is unambiguous: scale has been achieved; outcomes have not. What is needed is not more incremental effort, but a structural reimagining.

Part One — The Problems

The report's central analytical finding is that five barriers recur across *every* learner and worker segment — school students, tertiary learners, the formal and informal workforce, NEET youth and women. They manifest differently. They do not disappear.

1

People do not know what is credible, or what it returns

Lack of awareness of the right programmes is named among the top three reasons for not skilling by **47% of women, 43% of NEET youth, 36% of higher-education students, 52% of formal workers and 55% of informal workers**. Degrees get chosen for prestige or exam eligibility rather than outcomes. Vocational routes carry stigma, and online courses are widely distrusted as generic and hands-off.

The report quantifies the cost of this blind spot. A generic undergraduate *without* skilling starts at roughly ₹22,000 a month; *with* skilling, roughly ₹29,000. Over ten years that gap compounds to about **₹9.7 lakh**. The information almost never reaches the learner at the moment the choice is made.

2

Willing to skill, unable to reach it

Fewer than one in twelve secondary schools offers NSQF-aligned skilling. Working learners face prohibitive opportunity costs, and flexible formats are scarce. The report also documents something rarely said out loud: **informal gatekeeping**, where senior workers withhold trade knowledge from juniors, stretching advancement over years.

For women, the constraint is geographic. Roughly **75% need programmes within a 5 km radius**, and **68–78% need part-time formats** to combine learning with caregiving.

3

Affordability is not just about fees

It is direct cost plus foregone income plus quality options priced beyond reach. More than **80% of informal workers** skill either free or for under ₹10,000; **72% of women** pay under ₹5,000 or nothing. The report is blunt that advanced and outcome-linked programmes — the ones that demonstrably work — are the ones most out of reach.

4

Learning is theoretical; work is not

This is the barrier closest to our own work. **80% of higher-education students** cite lack of practical experience and industry exposure as a major pain point. **47% of formal workers** name lack of prior work experience as their single biggest obstacle to a new job. Internships and apprenticeships are described in the report as "*frequently superficial or tokenistic — observation with unclear learning outcomes.*"

And on teaching quality, the report offers a line that should stop anyone in the digital marketing training business: practical courses are "*often mapped to faculty without industry know-how, such as commerce teachers delivering digital marketing content.*"

Alongside this: 34% of students cite lacking skills and 18% lack of interview preparation; **61% of students who want to build something of their own do not know how to begin**; and **82% of NEET youth** say interview preparation and employer connection are simply missing from the programmes available to them.

5

The system does not reward demonstrated capability

Parallel schemes across ministries and states produce duplication in some districts and gaps in others. More consequentially, **degree-based eligibility norms** in government and public-sector recruitment actively suppress skills-first hiring — and industry has few incentives to formally recognise the capability its own people already have.

The through-line

Read together, these five barriers describe a system that has become very good at moving people through programmes and very poor at establishing whether anything was actually learned. That is a measurement problem as much as a teaching problem — and it is the reason the report's remedies lean so heavily on proof, verification and published outcomes.

Part Two — The Solutions

The report answers with five core reforms and four system enablers, which together form what it calls a Reimagined Skilling Architecture.

FIVE CORE REFORMS

REFORM 01 **Start in school.** General Employability and Entrepreneurship Skills for every student from Grade 6 to 12, plus structured vocational pathways from Grade 9 — made credit-bearing so they count towards later qualifications.

REFORM 02 **Rebuild higher education around industry.** Move from generic degrees to **applied specialisations** — the report names *B.Com with Digital Marketing* as an example — delivered through campus skilling hubs, work-integrated and apprenticeship-embedded degrees, anchor labs, **practitioner faculty rather than slide-trainers**, credited internships and live projects, with stackable exits at each year.

REFORM 03 **Make standalone programmes outcome-linked.** Shift from enrolment-driven delivery to programmes co-created with industry, aimed at high-growth sectors, extending beyond entry-level roles, and paid for against verified results rather than seats filled.

REFORM 04 **Apprenticeship for all.** Reposition real work experience as a mainstream, trusted route rather than a fallback — with a single unified platform replacing today's fragmented, hard-to-navigate schemes.

REFORM 05 **Make guidance continuous.** Counselling institutionalised in schools and colleges — including for parents — community-based guidance for those outside formal education, dedicated channels for women, and honest perception-building about what different pathways actually lead to.

FOUR SYSTEM ENABLERS

ENABLER 01 **A Digital Skills Passport.** One lifelong learning account holding verified credentials, skills and work experience — with a **National Career Outcome Repository** publishing real salary and placement data by programme, a portable digital portfolio, and a **Skill Score** readiness index that tells people how future-ready they actually are.

ENABLER 02 **Outcome-based financing.** Move public money from enrolment to verified results, through learner-held skill vouchers, placement-linked loans and pay-for-results instruments — with an explicit caution to calibrate so harder-to-place learners are not excluded.

ENABLER 03 **Make the National Credit Framework real.** Credits must become valid prerequisites for further education and employment, not merely accumulated — which requires credible, standardised assessment with clear rubrics, evidence and verification.

ENABLER 04 **Skills-first hiring and inclusive infrastructure.** Job descriptions written around competencies, degree filters removed where they are not statutory, selection by demonstrated skill — piloted in public-sector undertakings — alongside job-protected leave for upskilling and shared use of existing training infrastructure.

AND THREE PRINCIPLES UNDERNEATH ALL OF IT

01

Non-linear learning pathways

People move between education, skilling and work as life and the labour market demand — not once, in sequence.

02

Skilling as a lifelong process

Learning is cumulative and continuous, not an episode that concludes with a credential.

03

Outcomes as the measure of success

Employability, progression and livelihoods — not enrolment, not completion, not certificates.

Part Three — How This Maps to Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is where aFactor has chosen to prove its method first. It is also, unusually, a field where every one of the report's structural findings shows up in a concrete and recognisable form.

The field changes faster than curricula can be revised. It is taught, more often than not, by people who have never run a campaign with real budget at stake. It is credentialed through certificates that verify course completion rather than capability. And it is hired for through job descriptions that list tools instead of judgement. The report's diagnosis is not an abstraction here; it is a description.

Here is how the report's findings translate into the specific choices we have made.

THE REPORT FINDS

Learners lack "practical exposure and proof of work" — 80% of higher-education students name this as their main gap.

WHAT WE DO

- Graduation at aFactor requires **a portfolio, not attendance**. A learner leaves with demonstrable work, not a record of hours watched.

THE REPORT FINDS

Practical courses are "mapped to faculty without industry know-how — commerce teachers delivering digital marketing content."

WHAT WE DO

- We teach with **practitioners and builders, not slide-trainers**. People who have owned the outcome they are teaching.

THE REPORT FINDS

Programmes should be built around **job roles and competencies**, not around tools and platforms.

WHAT WE DO

- Our architecture is **role-based, never technology-based** — seven defined digital marketing roles, each with its own competency profile. Our assessments deliberately do not measure tool familiarity.

THE REPORT FINDS

Employability skills must be embedded across programmes as credit-bearing content, not bolted on as separate modules.

WHAT WE DO

- Ten universal competency domains — analytical ability, execution discipline, ownership, communication, judgement — are **embedded into role actions**. We do not run separate classes on leadership or analytics in isolation.

THE REPORT FINDS

Internships and apprenticeships are "frequently superficial or tokenistic — observation with unclear learning outcomes."

WHAT WE DO

- Real work is **supervised, role-aligned and competence-gated**. Access is earned through demonstrated readiness — never purchased, and never granted for exposure alone.

THE REPORT FINDS

A **Skill Score** readiness index is needed so people can see how prepared they actually are for a role.

WHAT WE DO

- Our **Role Suitability Assessment** already does this — seven domains, calibrated by experience level, reported as readiness bands. It is diagnostic, not a verdict: every band comes with a path forward.

THE REPORT FINDS

Skilling must be **lifelong and cumulative**, not an episode that ends with a certificate.

WHAT WE DO

- Continuous learning with re-assessment and re-certification — **pay for progress, not for access**. Capability is re-established over time rather than assumed from a past credential.

THE REPORT FINDS

Mid-career professionals in disrupted roles "recognise the risk late" and have no structured reskilling route.

WHAT WE DO

- Working professionals and career switchers are core segments, not an afterthought — taught in **mixed cohorts** where freshers gain maturity and professionals build leadership.

THE REPORT FINDS

Women need proximate, flexible access: ~75% cannot travel beyond 5 km; 68–78% require part-time formats.

WHAT WE DO

- We are **online-first by design**, which removes the distance constraint entirely and makes serious, industry-grade learning reachable regardless of where someone lives.

Part Four — How Aligned Are We, Honestly

We built aFactor around a set of commitments that were, at the time, simply our own convictions. The table below sets those commitments against what the report now recommends. We have included the places where we do not match as well as the places where we do.

What NITI Aayog finds or recommends	aFactor's position	Where we stand
Programmes "prioritise enrolment and completion over placement, progression or income outcomes"	The promise is not a job — it is transformation into competence. Graduation requires proof of capability, not attendance	Aligned
Learners lack practical exposure and proof of work — cited by 80% of higher-education students	Every learner produces a portfolio. Portfolio-backed competence is what we compete on	Aligned
Practical courses are taught by "faculty without industry know-how"	Practitioners and builders over slide-trainers	Aligned
Curricula are "outdated and misaligned with evolving industry needs" and must evolve continuously	Curriculum revised annually at minimum, ideally continuously, under industry guidance	Aligned
Move from generic degrees to applied specialisations — the report names <i>B.Com with Digital Marketing</i>	Role-based programmes built around seven defined digital marketing roles	Aligned
Build around job roles and competencies , not tools and platforms	Role-based, never technology-based. Assessments deliberately exclude tool knowledge and platform familiarity	Aligned Our position is stricter
Employability and entrepreneurship skills must be embedded across programmes, not bolted on	Ten competency domains embedded into role actions. Teaching is integrated, never siloed	Aligned Ours is more granular
A Skill Score readiness index — benchmarked, diagnostic, with a pathway attached	Role Suitability Assessment: seven domains, four readiness bands, experience-calibrated, guidance not verdict	Aligned Already operating
A National Career Outcome Repository so learners and employers can see verified outcomes	An industry-facing readiness scorecard: recruiters see bands they can trust; candidates self-select honestly	Aligned
Portable, verifiable proof of work that travels with the individual	The portfolio and readiness signal are the graduation artefacts	Aligned

What NITI Aayog finds or recommends	aFactor's position	Where we stand
Learning must be cumulative and lifelong , not episodic	Continuous learning, re-assessment and re-certification — pay for progress, not access	Aligned
Mid-career professionals in disrupted roles lack structured reskilling routes	Working professionals and career switchers are core segments with dedicated progression	Aligned
Industry co-ownership must extend into guidance, curriculum design and training quality	Governing Council and Education Excellence Council; practitioner faculty; supervised real work	Aligned
Guidance is the missing continuous layer — between 36% and 55% of every segment cites lack of trusted information	Pre-course assessment for fit, role-fit diagnostics and career gap mapping, offered as standing services	Aligned
Internships and apprenticeships are "superficial or tokenistic"	Real work is supervised, role-aligned and competence-gated — access is earned, never bought	Aligned Directly answers the critique
Women need proximate and flexible access — ~75% within 5 km, 68–78% part-time	Online-first by design, which removes the distance constraint entirely	Aligned in effect Not something we have claimed before
Skills-first hiring — competency-based job descriptions, degree filters removed	Our entire model assumes hiring will move toward demonstrated capability	A tailwind, not yet a reality
Affordability is a binding constraint; quality programmes are "prohibitively expensive" for those who need them most	We are premium by design, because we will not compromise on rigour, faculty or assessment	Not aligned — by choice

On the last row

We think it is worth stating plainly. The report is right that cost keeps serious skilling away from the people who need it most, and our current model does not solve that. We are answering the report's *quality* problem, not its *access* problem. Closing that gap — without lowering a single competence threshold — is work still ahead of us, and we would rather say so than let a table imply otherwise.

In conclusion

We did not build aFactor in response to this report. We built it because the gap between what people are taught and what industry requires was visible to anyone willing to look. What the report does is confirm that the gap is structural, national, and measurable — and that the way out of it runs through capability, proof and published outcomes rather than through certificates.

That is the direction we were already walking. The work now is to keep walking it well.

Source: NITI Aayog (2026). *Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047*. August 2026. Prepared by the Skill Development, Labour and Employment Division, NITI Aayog, with Boston Consulting Group as knowledge partner. All statistics quoted here are as reported in that publication and its cited sources, including the MSDE State of Skills Survey 2024, PLFS 2023–24, AISHE, UDISE+ and the Economic Survey 2024–25.

Please note: This document is aFactor's own summary and interpretation of a public policy document. It is not issued, endorsed or reviewed by NITI Aayog, and no affiliation with NITI Aayog or any government body is claimed or implied. Readers are encouraged to consult the original report.

© 2026 aFactor. Published 25 August 2026.