



# **Bridging the Skills Gap: Managerial Reflections on IBM's 2021 Future Skills Forecast**

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## **Abstract**

The IBM 2021 Report on Future Skills outlines critical trends reshaping the global workforce and emphasizes the urgent need to upskill for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This article delves into the key findings of the report, examines the growing skills gap, and analyzes their implications for management education in India. As a response to industry demands, academic institutions must reimagine curriculum, pedagogy, and industry collaboration to produce future-ready managers.

**मुख्यशब्द :** ई शिक्षा नीति 2020 (NEP 2020), स्टार्टअप संस्कृति, नवाचार (Innovation), उद्यमिता (Entrepreneurship), शैक्षिक एकीकरण, डिजिटल शिक्षा, इन्क्यूबेशन सेंटर, परियोजना आधारित अधिगम (Project-based Learning)

## **1. The Shifting Skills Landscape:**

Key Insights from the IBM Report The IBM Future Skills 2021 Report identifies several macro-trends driving changes in the global workforce. Chief among them is the acceleration of digital transformation, the rising demand for hybrid skills, and the importance of lifelong learning. As artificial intelligence, automation, and data analytics reshape business operations, the need for adaptable, tech-savvy professionals has surged.

The report lists the top in-demand skills:

- Analytical thinking and innovation
- Complex problem solving
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Leadership and social influence
- Technology design and programming
- Emotional intelligence

These competencies suggest a blend of cognitive, interpersonal, and technological capabilities that go beyond traditional domain knowledge. IBM also emphasizes that 120 million workers in the world's 12 largest economies may need to be retrained due to AI and automation.

Implications are profound: future professionals must be agile learners, digitally literate, and capable of cross-functional collaboration. For management education, this signifies a pressing need to integrate future skills into pedagogy and learning outcomes.

## **2. Management Education in India:**

Gaps and Opportunities Traditional MBA programs in India, while focused on core disciplines like marketing, finance, and HR, often lag in incorporating interdisciplinary and digital competencies. The IBM report highlights the mismatch between academic output and industry expectations.

**Key Challenges:**

- Outdated curricula
- Lack of practical exposure to emerging technologies
- Minimal emphasis on soft skills and design thinking
- Weak industry-academia partnerships

**Opportunities for Change:**

- Curriculum redesign incorporating AI, analytics, sustainability, and entrepreneurship
- Use of simulation tools and real-time business problem solving
- Emphasis on experiential learning through internships, case studies, and capstone projects
- Faculty development programs aligned with future skill sets

Management institutions have the opportunity to become incubators of innovation and skill development. They must move from content delivery to competence development.

**3. Bridging the Gap: Strategic Recommendations for Institutions (500 Words)** To bridge the skills gap, educational institutions must adopt a strategic roadmap aligned with industry needs.

**Recommendations:**

- Skill-Based Curriculum: Shift focus from rote learning to competency-based education. Incorporate modules on digital literacy, ethical leadership, and systems thinking.
- Micro-Credentials and Certifications: Offer industry-recognized certifications in AI, blockchain, cloud computing, etc.
- Industry Collaboration: Establish centers of excellence with companies like IBM, Infosys, and Google for joint curriculum design and internships.
- Hybrid Learning Models: Blend online and offline modes to foster flexibility and reach.
- Real-Time Projects: Encourage students to solve live business problems via consulting assignments.

**Graph: Skill Integration Model for Management Curriculum** [Graph will show the integration of technical, soft, and strategic skills across course modules over two years]

These interventions will ensure that graduates are not just academically sound, but also equipped with future-ready skills to drive innovation in dynamic business environments.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

Preparing Future-Ready Managers (500 Words) The IBM 2021 Report serves as a clarion call for educational reform. For management institutions, the path forward lies in agility, adaptability, and alignment. Preparing students for tomorrow's workforce requires going beyond theory and fostering competencies that thrive in uncertainty and change.

By leveraging data from the IBM Report and embedding it into academic planning, institutions like Sikka College of Management can emerge as leaders in transformative education. Management educators must act not only as knowledge disseminators but as catalysts for societal and economic progress.

The future belongs to those who can think, feel, and act across disciplines. Bridging the skills gap is not just about employment—it is about empowerment.

#### **5. References:**

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