BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE FUTURE WORKFORCE: THE ROLE OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

As rightly said by Robert Greene, “The future belongs to those who learn more skills and combine them in creative ways” (Greene, n.d.), the future of the workforce and learning is rapidly evolving due to technological advancements, changing global demographics, and the growing need for skills in new and emerging industries. To meet these challenges, it is essential for the workforce and education systems to adapt and stay ahead of the curve. The role of continuous learning and transferable skills in the future workforce cannot be overstated. These will be essential in preparing individuals for the future of work. With the increasing pace of technological change, it’s likely that many jobs will become automated in the coming years. In order to remain relevant and competitive in the job market, individuals must be able to adapt to new technologies and continuously learn new skills. The key to success will be a focus on lifelong learning and the development of transferable skills that can be applied in a variety of contexts. Besides this, interdisciplinary approaches, inclusive and diverse learning environments, and the integration of technology in education will be crucial in preparing individuals for the workforce of the future. The future of workforce and learning is an exciting and dynamic field, and it is important for individuals, organizations, and governments to actively engage in shaping its trajectory.

Keywords: workforce, technological advancements, continuous learning, transferable skills, lifelong learning

INTRODUCTION

The future of workforce and learning landscape is rapidly changing, and it’s essential to understand its direction to ensure individuals, organizations and governments are prepared. In this process the importance of continuous learning and transferable skills for success in a
rapidly changing job market cannot be overlooked as these factors play a vital role in building resilience in the future workforce.

RESILIENCE

Resilience in the workforce refers to the ability of individuals and organizations to adapt to change, overcome adversity, and thrive in the face of challenges (Luthans et al., 2006). Building resilience in the workforce is essential for success in an increasingly volatile job market, and requires continuous learning and development of transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving to list a few.

Resilience is crucial in a rapidly changing job market because it allows individuals to navigate and overcome challenges, adapt to change, and secure a successful and fulfilling career. Having resilience means being able to bounce back from setbacks, handle stress and uncertainty, and maintain a positive outlook even in the face of adversity. It also involves having the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt to new technologies and changing job demands. In today’s job market, change is the only constant. Technological innovation and shifting global demands are rapidly transforming the job market, making it increasingly difficult for individuals to stay current and relevant in their careers. By building resilience, individuals can take control of their own careers and futures, remain competitive in the job market, and secure long-term success and fulfilment. This is particularly important in a rapidly changing job market, where individuals must be proactive in developing their skills and knowledge in order to stay current and relevant.

The current state of the workforce is rapidly changing and facing many challenges

Some key trends and challenges include:

• Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI)- They are transforming many industries, leading to changes in the types of jobs available and the skills required for those jobs. While automation has the potential to increase efficiency and productivity, it also has the potential to displace many workers, particularly those in low-skill, routine jobs.

• Globalization- It has created new opportunities and challenges for workers including increasing competition and the need for greater mobility and flexibility. Workers must be
prepared to compete in a global marketplace, and must be able to adapt to changing demands and conditions.

- The Gig Economy- It encompasses freelance and contract work and is growing rapidly, and many workers are seeking more flexibility and control over their work arrangements. However, the gig economy can also be precarious, with limited job security and benefits, and workers must be prepared to adapt to these changes in order to succeed.

Building self-resilience is crucial for the future workforce for several reasons:

- Career Longevity: A self-resilient workforce is better equipped to adapt to change and handle challenges, leading to longer and more fulfilling careers.
- Employability: Companies value employees who have a strong sense of self-resilience, as they are less likely to be intimidated by obstacles and can respond positively to challenges and change.
- Mental Health: Resilience helps individuals better cope with stress and challenges, leading to improved mental health and overall well-being.
- Personal Growth: By building self-resilience, individuals can overcome obstacles, reach their full potential, and achieve their personal and professional goals.
- Preparedness for Uncertainty: The future of work is uncertain, and the ability to adapt and bounce back from adversity is essential for success. Building self-resilience prepares individuals for an ever-changing job market and economy.

Overall, building self-resilience is a key factor in career success, personal growth, and overall well-being in the future workforce.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

“Lifelong learning is no longer optional. It is an essential part of the new world of work”- Andrew Ng., cofounder of Google Brain & Coursera.

Continuous learning and professional development are critical components of preparing for the future workforce, as the job market is rapidly changing and new skills are required for workers to succeed. The focus must be on developing the skills that are transferable, meaning they can be applied across a variety of job sectors and industries.
Benefits of continuous learning for the organization and for the individuals are as mentioned below:

- **Benefits for Organization**

Establishing a culture of learning within an organization is not only a means of enhancing performance and fostering innovation, but it can also boost employee satisfaction and promote retention. Below mentioned are the few reasons:

- **Empowered Employees**: With increased knowledge and skills, employees are better equipped to make meaningful contributions to the organizations.
- **Cost Efficiency**: Investing in employee development is a cost-effective solution compared to the expense of recruiting and training new hires.
- **Demonstrating Employee Value**: Supporting ongoing learning initiatives conveys the organization’s commitment to employee growth and career advancement, which in turn boosts employee satisfaction and retention.

- **Benefits for the individual**

Continuously updating knowledge or skills can help an employee in both their professional life and personal life for a number of reasons. Below mentioned are a few of them.

- **Improved Performance**: Updating one's knowledge and skills can lead to enhanced job performance and competence.
- **Career Advancement**: Further training, education, and skill development can help meet career goals or facilitate a transition into a new role.
- **License Maintenance**: Ongoing learning is essential for employees who need to maintain or renew professional licenses or certifications.
- **Increased Opportunities**: Investing time in learning a new skill or acquiring knowledge can have a positive impact on work performance and increase the likelihood of future promotions or financial incentives.
- **Personal Growth**: Personal interests often extend beyond the job, and pursuing them can lead to new insights and opportunities.
- **Marketability**: Keeping up with the latest trends and advancements in one's field can help maintain marketability and increase career flexibility.
TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving will be highly valuable in future workforce, as they are essential for success in a rapidly changing job market and are applicable across multiple industries and roles. They are the benefits acquired from various career experiences such as volunteering, internships, freelance work, and more. These are the skills that can be applied in any professional setting.

Examples of transferable skills include:

- **Flexibility and adaptability**- the ability to adjust and respond to changes and challenges in the work place. For example, the response and reaction of a person adjusting the plans when circumstances beyond control lead to delays.

- **Critical thinking and problem solving**- the ability to analyse situations and develop effective solutions. For example, approach of an individual to the hurdles posed in his day-to-day work.

- **Initiative and resourcefulness**- taking action without being prompted and finding creative solutions in challenging situations. For example, if a teacher finds significant number of students struggling with a particular concept, she changes the teaching methodology and incorporates technology to make lesson more interactive and engaging instead of awaiting help from the authorities.

- **Innovation and creativity**- bringing new ideas and perspectives to the workplace. For example, suggesting changes to a prevailing policy to improve environment of the workplace.

- **Leadership and organizational skills**- the ability to inspire and motivate a team, and to plan and co-ordinate activities effectively. For example, even if you are not in a role where you lead or manage a team, are there other activities in which you participate actively?

- **Effective communication**- the ability to listen, speak, and write effectively and appropriately in different settings. For example, can you think of a situation when you used active listening skills to identify the needs and wants of the students – their fears, concerns and their aspirations.
• **Collaboration and teamwork**: The ability to work effectively with others to achieve common goals. Example, time when you stepped in and helped a colleague who was struggling with something.

Here are some reasons why transferable skills are valuable:

• **Relevance across jobs and industries**: Transferable skills such as critical thinking and problem solving can be applied in a variety of industries and jobs, making them highly valuable in a rapidly changing job market where individuals may need to switch careers multiple times over their lifetime.

• **Improved collaboration and teamwork**: They are essential for success in the workplace, where individuals are increasingly working in teams and collaborating with others from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

• **Problem-solving and Innovation**: These are essential for success in the modern workplace, where individuals need to be able to quickly and effectively solve complex problems and find innovative solutions to challenges.

• **Adaptability and resilience**: Transferable skills help individuals adapt to change and remain resilient in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, which is becoming increasingly important in a rapidly changing job market.

Research also reveals that technical skills are becoming obsolete increasingly quickly with the ‘half-life’ or longevity of skills falling to around five years. Developing transferable skills such as adaptability and resilience will foster the mindset and attitudes that will enable you to acquire and master new skills throughout your career, regardless of job role or industry. As skills needs continue to evolve and change, the importance of transferable skills should not be underestimated.

**THE INTERSECTION OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**

Continuous learning and transferable skills complement each other in building resilience in the future workforce by providing individuals with the knowledge, skills, and adaptability needed to navigate the challenges and uncertainties of the job market.
Continuous learning refers to a lifelong process of acquiring new knowledge and skills through education, training, and professional development. It helps individuals stay current and relevant in their careers, adapting to new technologies and changing job demands. By continuously learning and growing, individuals can increase their value in the job market, expand their career options, and remain competitive in a rapidly changing job market.

Transferable skills, on the other hand, are skills that can be applied across different jobs and industries. They include critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and leadership, among others. Transferable skills help individuals be flexible and adaptable in their careers, as they can be applied in a variety of contexts and industries.

When combined, continuous learning and transferable skills provide individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the challenges and uncertainties of the job market, as well as the adaptability and versatility to transition to new roles and industries as needed. They work together to build resilience in the future workforce by allowing individuals to continuously grow and develop, adapt to change, and secure long-term success and fulfilment in their careers (European Commission, 2019; OECD, 2020).

Individuals can develop continuous learning and transferable skills through real-world experiences, lifelong learning, and professional development opportunities.

Real-world experiences: On-the-job experience provides valuable learning opportunities that can be applied to future work. Taking on new projects, working with different people and learning from challenges and successes can help individuals develop new skills and knowledge that they can use to adapt to change.

Lifelong learning: Engaging in lifelong learning activities, such as taking courses, attending workshops, and reading books, can help individuals continuously grow and develop their knowledge and skills. This type of learning helps individuals stay current and relevant in their careers, and prepares them for new opportunities.

Professional development opportunities: Employers often offer professional development opportunities, such as training programs, workshops, and conferences, to help employees enhance their skills and knowledge. By taking advantage of these opportunities, individuals can develop new skills, gain new insights, and stay current in their fields.
By engaging in these activities, individuals can continuously grow and develop, adapt to change, and secure long-term success and fulfilment in their careers.

**DESIGN, PARTICIPANTS & PROCEDURE**

To know about the opinion about importance of continuous learning and developing transferable skills in building resilience in the future workforce, the google form consisting of a questionnaire was circulated to employees working in education sector. 42 females and 8 males responded it.

**RESULTS**

Below mentioned are the results and findings of each question asked.

1. To what extent do you believe transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving are important in building resilience in the future workforce?

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses to question 1]

30 respondents believed that transferable skills are extremely important in building resilience in the future workforce while 20 of them agreed that these skills are very important.

2. What steps have you taken to develop transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving?
29 respondents participated in team projects or activities, 10 were engaged in self-study or personal projects and 11 pursued professional development and training opportunities to develop their transferable skills.

3. How important do you believe continuous learning and professional development is for building resilience in the future workforce?

35 respondents believed that continuous learning and professional development is extremely important for building resilience in the future workforce whereas 15 believed they are important.

4. How would you rate your current level of continuous learning and professional development?

Building Resilience in the future workforce: The Role of Continuous Learning and Transferable Skills by Ms. Purvi B. Arora is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0
39 respondents rated their current level of continuous learning to be moderate which is a matter of concern whereas 10 of them were actively engaged in the process.

5. How often do you seek out opportunities for continuous learning and professional development in your current role?

34 respondents seemed to seek out the opportunities for continuous learning & professional development in their current state of employment whereas 15 rarely got the chance to do so.

6. In your opinion, what role do you think organizations and policymakers should play in building resilience in the future workforce?
7. Does your organization offer continuous learning and professional development opportunities for employees?

8. How would you rate the support and resources provided by your current organization for continuous learning and professional development?
9. How open-minded are you to exploring new career opportunities and industries in the future?

10. How confident are you in your ability to transition to a new career or industry if needed in the future?

11. How confident are you in your ability to adapt to changes in your industry or job market?
DISCUSSION

The results of the questionnaire suggest that the respondents believe transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and problem solving are extremely or very important in building resilience in the future workforce. They also recognize the importance of continuous learning and professional development for building resilience in the future workforce.

However, the majority of the respondents rated their current level of continuous learning to be only moderate, indicating a need for improvement in this area. Additionally, while a significant number of respondents seek out opportunities for continuous learning and professional development in their current roles, there are still some who rarely get the chance to do so.

Respondents also emphasized the role that organizations and policymakers should play in building resilience in the future workforce. They believe that institutions should offer continuous learning and professional development opportunities for their employees and provide the necessary support and resources for their personal and professional growth.

Finally, the respondents expressed openness to exploring new career opportunities and industries in the future, and they were generally confident in their ability to transition to a new career or industry if needed. They also expressed confidence in their ability to adapt to changes in their industry or job market.

Overall, the findings suggest that continuous learning and developing transferable skills are essential for building resilience in the future workforce. Institutions and policymakers should prioritize providing opportunities for continuous learning and professional development to their employees to support their personal and professional growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below mentioned are a few recommendations for individuals, organizations, and policymakers on how to build resilience in the future workforce:

- **Individuals**
  - Invest in continuous learning and professional development to acquire new skills and stay current with industry trends.
Focus on developing transferable skills.

- Stay open minded and flexible to new career opportunities and industries.

**Organizations**

- Offer continuous learning and professional development opportunities for employees to acquire new skills and stay current with industry trends.

- Foster a culture that values continuous learning and development of transferable skills.

- Provide support and resources to employees for transition to new career paths as needed.

Educational institutions can play an important role in helping students develop continuous learning and transferable skills. Here are some ways they can do so:

- **Incorporate real-world experiences**: Integrating real-world experiences, such as internships, co-op programs, and hands-on projects, into the curriculum helps students apply their knowledge and develop transferable skills in a practical setting.

- **Encourage lifelong learning**: Encouraging a growth mindset and promoting the value of continuous learning can help students understand the importance of developing new skills and knowledge throughout their careers.

- **Offer diverse learning opportunities**: Providing students with a variety of learning opportunities, such as online courses, workshops, and guest speakers, helps them expand their knowledge and develop new skills in a flexible and accessible way.

- **Foster collaboration and teamwork**: Creating opportunities for students to work on group projects and collaborate with their peers helps them develop important teamwork and communication skills that are transferable to a variety of industries and roles.

- **Provide career support**: Offering career support and guidance, such as resume writing workshops and mock interviews, can help students prepare for the job market and develop the skills necessary to succeed in their careers.

**Policy makers**

- Invest in education and training programs that support continuous learning and professional development of transferable skills.

- Encourage organisations to offer continuous learning and professional development opportunities for employees.
-Promote policies that support career transitions and the development of transferable skills.

Building self-resilience for the future workforce can be achieved by continuously learning new skills and developing transferable abilities. Continuous learning helps individuals stay relevant in a rapidly changing job market and adapt to new challenges. Transferable skills can be applied to various industries and roles, making individuals more versatile and valuable to potential employers. By building self-resilience through continuous learning and transferable skills, individuals can future proof their careers and thrive in an ever-evolving job market.

REFERENCES


