



SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY OF DDU-GKY IN KEONJHAR DISTRICT OF ODISHA: A PILOT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) is a flagship program of the Government of India designed to promote skill development and enhance employability among rural youth. This pilot study explores the effectiveness of DDU-GKY initiatives in the Keonjhar district of Odisha, focusing on their impact on skill enhancement, employability, and socio-economic upliftment. Keonjhar, a predominantly rural district with a diverse tribal population, faces challenges related to unemployment and lack of vocational opportunities. The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to assess the program's reach, implementation, and outcomes. A sample of beneficiaries was selected to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the training provided, along with its alignment with local job market demands. Findings suggest that while the program has succeeded in equipping participants with industry-relevant skills, gaps remain in terms of job placements, sustained employment, and addressing the aspirations of tribal youth. The study highlights the need for better infrastructure, localized training modules, and stronger industry linkages to ensure long-term impact. This pilot study provides actionable insights for policymakers, program implementers, and stakeholders to optimize DDU-GKY interventions in Keonjhar and similar rural contexts. It concludes with recommendations for scaling up the initiative and tailoring it to the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the region.

KEY WORDS: DDU-GKY; Rural Employment; Skill Development; Rural Livelihood; Migration.

JEL code: C1, C5, I3, J6, R2.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, skill development has become an essential focus for sustainable economic development in rural areas of India. With a large proportion of the population in rural regions relying on agriculture and unorganized sectors, enhancing skills is crucial for improving employability and economic conditions. The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2014, aims to enhance the employability of rural youth by providing skill training, which aligns with the demands of industries. The scheme focuses on providing market-relevant skills to youth, ensuring their integration into the mainstream workforce.

Keonjhar, a district located in the northern part of Odisha, is one of the regions where the DDU-GKY scheme has been implemented. Despite being rich in mineral resources, the district faces socio-economic challenges, particularly unemployment and low literacy rates. The DDU-GKY scheme aims to address these issues by offering training programs that can enhance the employability of rural youth in Keonjhar. This pilot study investigates the skill development initiatives under DDU-GKY in Keonjhar district, analysing the employability outcomes of the beneficiaries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Review of Related Literature provides a comprehensive analysis of existing studies and research related to skill development and employability, with a focus on initiatives such as the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY). This section establishes the context for the current pilot study conducted in Keonjhar district, Odisha, by synthesizing relevant findings from global, national, and regional perspectives. Research highlights the importance of vocational training programs in addressing unemployment worldwide. Studies by the International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasize that skill development tailored to local



economies significantly enhances employability among rural youth. Successful programs in Southeast Asia, such as Skills Future in Singapore, provide models for integrating training with industry demands, which can inform DDU-GKY implementation. Skill development has been a cornerstone of India's development strategy, as evidenced by the National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015. The effectiveness of initiatives like Skill India and DDU-GKY in bridging the skill gap among rural youth, though challenges such as mismatch between training and market needs persist (Agarwal & Sharan, 2018).

DDU-GKY has been extensively studied for its role in empowering rural youth. Sharma and Gupta (2020) found that the program has significantly improved access to structured vocational training in underdeveloped regions. However, they also highlighted issues such as dropout rates and limited industry partnerships. Studies focusing on DDU-GKY in Odisha have identified both achievements and challenges. The program has helped tribal youth gain employment in sectors like retail, construction, and hospitality (Nayak and Mohanty, 2021). Nevertheless, infrastructure and post-training support remain weak.

Research work done by Patel et al. (2019) underscores the unique challenges faced by tribal communities, such as linguistic and cultural barriers, which hinder their participation in skill training programs. Customizing training to respect tribal traditions and livelihoods has been suggested as a key improvement area. It is also seen that employability is not just about skill acquisition but also about connecting trainees with job opportunities (Reddy, 2017). Programs with strong industry linkages, such as the PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana), have demonstrated better outcomes in this regard compared to standalone training programs.

A gendered analysis of DDU-GKY reveals that women, especially from marginalized communities, often face additional barriers to accessing training and employment opportunities (Sen & Sinha, 2021). Interventions promoting gender-sensitive training and work environments have shown promising results.

Studies indicate that while DDU-GKY provides foundational skills, there is a need for mechanisms supporting lifelong learning and upskilling (Raj & Thomas, 2019). Without such support, participants risk stagnation in their careers. Recent evaluations of DDU-GKY stress the importance of robust monitoring and feedback mechanisms to enhance program quality (Joshi, 2022). They recommend data-driven adjustments to ensure alignment with evolving labour market trends.

The importance of skill development in improving employability has been well-documented in various studies. Skill development programs such as DDU-GKY have the potential to provide rural youth with opportunities to improve their socio-economic conditions. According to Chandran et al. (2020), the success of such schemes is highly dependent on the alignment of the skills provided with local industry needs and the effectiveness of training delivery. Khurana and Pathak (2019) highlights that vocational training can significantly improve the self-esteem and confidence of individuals, leading to better job opportunities. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of quality trainers, and the gap between skill development and industry requirements continue to hinder the success of such programs.

In the case of Keonjhar, where the economy is largely dependent on mining, agriculture, and informal sectors, aligning training programs with industry needs is critical. Previous studies have shown that when skill development programs are tailored to local industries, the employment outcomes are significantly improved (Das & Dey, 2018). Research by Das and Singh (2020) highlights those Eastern Indian states, including Odisha, have made significant strides in implementing DDU-GKY. However, regional disparities in program outreach and effectiveness persist due to logistical and administrative challenges.

This review demonstrates the multifaceted nature of skill development and employability challenges, offering a critical lens through which to examine the effectiveness of DDU-GKY in Keonjhar district. It also highlights gaps in the literature that this pilot study seeks to address, particularly in relation to tribal populations and localized implementation strategies.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This pilot study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the DDU-GKY scheme in enhancing skill development and employability among rural youth in Keonjhar district. The specific objectives of the study are;

1. Assess the effectiveness of the skill development programs offered under DDU-GKY in Keonjhar,
2. Evaluate the employment outcomes and employability skills of beneficiaries after completing the training,
3. Identify challenges and barriers to the successful implementation of DDU-GKY in the district.



4. METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study focuses on Keonjhar district in Odisha, which is one of the key areas in the state where the DDU-GKY scheme is operational. Keonjhar has a predominantly rural population, with a large number of youths engaged in agriculture and related unorganized sectors.

Sampling

A purposive sampling method was used to select the participants for the study. The sample included:

- 100 beneficiaries of the DDU-GKY program from various training centres in Keonjhar.
- 10 trainers involved in the program’s implementation.

5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection:

Survey Questionnaire: Structured questionnaires were administered to the beneficiaries to assess the skills acquired, training experience, and post-training employment status.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with trainers and employers to understand the quality of training, industry alignment, and challenges faced in the program’s implementation.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): FGDs were conducted with the beneficiaries to gain deeper insights into their experiences with the training and the employability outcomes.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Statistical tools were used to analyse the survey responses, while the interview transcripts and focus group discussions were coded to identify recurring themes.

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected during the pilot study on the skill development and employability outcomes of the DDU-GKY in Keonjhar district, Odisha. The findings are based on quantitative data collected from beneficiaries through structured surveys and qualitative insights from interviews with trainers, employers, and focus group discussions.

6.1. Demographic Profile of Beneficiaries

Table-1.1 Age distribution

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| 18-25 | 65 | 65 |
| 25-30 | 20 | 20 |
| 30-35 | 10 | 10 |
| 35 and above | 5 | 5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

The above table (1.1) reveals that the majority (65%) were between 18–25 years. 20% were between 25-30 years followed by 10% from 30-35 years, reflecting the program’s focus on young rural youth.

Table 1.2 Gender distribution

| Sr. No | Sex | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|--------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Male | 58 | 58 |
| 2 | Female | 42 | 42 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

The above table (1.2) reveals that the sample consisted of 100 beneficiaries, with 58% male and 42% female participants.



Table-1.3 Educational qualification of household

| Sr. No. | Education | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Primary level | 15 | 15 |
| 2 | Secondary | 40 | 40 |
| 3 | Higher Secondary | 30 | 30 |
| 4 | Graduate | 10 | 10 |
| 5 | Post- Graduate | 5 | 5 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

It is observed from the Table 1.3, around 40% of the respondents had completed secondary education, while 30% had higher secondary qualifications. Only 10% reported possessing a graduate degree and 5% had post-graduate, indicating a higher reach among less-educated rural youth.

6.2 Socio-Economic Status

A significant proportion (81%) of the participants came from families with an annual income below ₹1,50,000. The beneficiaries predominantly belonged to economically weaker sections, aligning with the scheme’s objectives.

The demographic data indicates that DDU-GKY has successfully reached its target audience, particularly young individuals from marginalized socio-economic backgrounds. However, the lower representation of female participants highlights the need to address gender-related barriers to participation.

6.3. Training Effectiveness

According to the Table 1.4, it is revealed that 74% of beneficiaries rated the training sessions as “good” or “very good,” while 16% felt it was “average,” and 10% considered it “poor”. This data shows that majority of beneficiaries satisfied from this training. The training modules on soft skills, including communication and workplace etiquette, received positive feedback from 82% of the participants. However, the participants were satisfied with the technical skill training, citing outdated equipment and limited hands-on practice.

Table-1.4 Perception of Training Quality

| Sr. No | Quality of training | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|---------------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Good | 74 | 74 |
| 2 | Average | 16 | 16 |
| 3 | Poor | 10 | 10 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

6.4 Alignment with Market Demands

According to the Table 1.5, it is revealed that Around 48% of beneficiaries felt the training was aligned with available job opportunities in Keonjhar, while 34% believed it lacked relevance to the local job market. Trainers acknowledged the need for additional courses tailored to industries such as mining and agro-processing, which dominate the region.

Table-1.5 Training aligned with available job opportunities

| Sr. No | Training aligned with available job opportunities | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | Yes | 48 | 48 |
| 2 | No | 34 | 34 |
| 3 | Not sure | 18 | 18 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

The training was well-received overall, particularly the emphasis on soft skills. However, gaps in technical training and alignment with local industries indicate the need for curriculum updates to ensure higher relevance to Keonjhar job market.



7. EMPLOYABILITY OUTCOMES

Table: 1.6 Post-Training Employment Status

| Sr. No | Current status | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Employed | 60 | 60 |
| 2 | Searching job | 25 | 25 |
| 3 | Dropped out from job | 15 | 15 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

As mentioned in the Table 1.6, approximately 60% of the beneficiaries secured employment within six months of completing the training, while 25% were still searching for jobs. The remaining 15% either pursued further education or dropped out of the workforce.

8. SALARY AND JOB SATISFACTION

According to the Table 1.7 Most employed beneficiaries earned monthly salaries between ₹8,000 and ₹12,000. While 30 % earned monthly salaries between ₹12,000 - ₹16,000. Only 5% beneficiaries earned ₹20,000 and above.

Table: 1.7 Income of the respondent

| Sr. No | Income of the respondent | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | ₹ 8,000-₹ 12,000 | 55 | 55 |
| 2 | ₹12,000-₹16,000 | 30 | 30 |
| 3 | ₹16,000-₹20,000 | 10 | 10 |
| 4 | ₹20,000 and above | 5 | 5 |
| Total | | 100 | 100 |

Source: Primary data

The program showed moderate success in improving employability, with over half of the participants securing jobs. However, the low satisfaction levels, especially concerning wages and career progression, highlight the need for better job placements and post-training support. Gender disparities in placement rates require targeted interventions to encourage higher female participation and employment.

8. CHALLENGES FACED BY BENEFICIARIES

8.1 Accessibility and Infrastructure Issues

30% of the beneficiaries reported difficulties in accessing training centres due to inadequate transportation facilities. 40% expressed dissatisfaction with the training infrastructure, particularly the lack of practical tools.

8.2 Mismatch Between Training and Local Job Market

34% of participants reported that the skills imparted during training were not directly applicable to job opportunities available locally, particularly in mining and agro-industrial sectors.

8.3 Post-Placement Support

Only 20% of employed beneficiaries received follow-up support from training centres, such as mentor-ship or career counselling. Lack of post-placement support led to dissatisfaction among some participants, as they struggled to adapt to workplace environments.

Accessibility issues and infrastructural gaps pose significant challenges to the effectiveness of DDU-GKY in Keonjhar. The lack of alignment between training and local industry needs further diminishes employment outcomes, emphasizing the need for stronger collaboration between training providers and employers.

9. FEEDBACK FROM TRAINERS AND EMPLOYERS

9.1 Trainers' Perspective

Trainers highlighted the need for enhanced resources and advanced training modules to improve the quality of instruction. They also emphasized the importance of regular upskilling for trainers to stay updated with industry trends.

9.2 Employers' Perspective

Employers appreciated the soft skills of DDU-GKY graduates but expressed concerns about their technical competency. 50% of employers suggested introducing industry-specific certifications to meet the growing demand for skilled workers in mining and agro-processing sectors.



Feedback from trainers and employers underscores the importance of continuous improvement in training delivery and curriculum design. Collaboration with industries can enhance the relevance of training programs, ensuring better employability outcomes for beneficiaries.

10. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of DDU-GKY in Keonjhar was evaluated using key performance indicators (KPIs) such as placement rates, salary levels, and participant satisfaction.

Table: 1.8 The effectiveness of DDU-GKY

| KPI | Result | Observation |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Placement Rate | 60% | Moderate success in securing employment for beneficiaries. |
| Salary Range | ₹8,000–₹12,000 | Reflects entry-level job opportunities with limited earning potential. |
| Training Satisfaction | 74% (Good/Very Good) | Indicates positive perception of training quality but room for improvement. |
| Alignment with Market | with 48% (Relevant to Market) | Local Highlights a significant gap between training and industry requirements. |

The analysis reveals that DDU-GKY has had a positive but limited impact on skill development and employability in Keonjhar district. While the program has successfully reached its target audience and provided job opportunities to many beneficiaries, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited local job alignment, and gender disparities persist. Addressing these issues through better training resources, industry-specific modules, and stronger employer partnerships can significantly enhance the program’s effectiveness.

11. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- a. **Profile of Beneficiaries:** The majority of the beneficiaries were young adults aged 18-30 years, with a fair representation of both male and female participants. The educational background of the participants varied, with most having completed at least secondary school. Many of the beneficiaries came from economically disadvantaged families, primarily involved in agriculture or labour-based work.
- b. **Training Effectiveness:** The training programs under DDU-GKY were designed to provide skills in a range of industries including construction, hospitality, retail, and healthcare. According to the beneficiaries, the training was generally found to be comprehensive and hands-on. However, there were mixed opinions regarding the quality of training materials and the infrastructure at the training centres. While many felt that the soft skills training, such as communication and interpersonal skills, was beneficial, there were concerns about the technical training's applicability to local job markets. The trainers also noted that there was a need for more practical exposure to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its application in real-world job settings. Employers indicated that while the soft skills of DDU-GKY graduates were commendable, they required further technical training to meet industry standards.
- c. **Employability and Job Placement:** One of the key goals of DDU-GKY is to enhance employability. The study found that approximately 60% of the beneficiaries were able to secure employment within six months of completing their training. The majority found jobs in retail, hospitality, and construction sectors. However, many beneficiaries were placed in low-wage jobs with limited career advancement opportunities. The study found a significant gap between the training provided and the specific demands of local industries. The mismatch between skills taught and the needs of employers, particularly in sectors like mining and manufacturing, was a common challenge highlighted by both employers and beneficiaries.
- d. **Challenges Faced:** Several challenges were identified during the study:
 - o **Limited Infrastructure:** Many training centres lacked sufficient resources, including modern equipment and adequate classroom facilities.
 - o **Inadequate Job Linkages:** While training programs were implemented, there were gaps in linking the trained youth with relevant employers. Employers often lacked awareness about the program or had doubts regarding the quality of training.
 - o **Motivational Issues:** Some beneficiaries, particularly from economically weaker backgrounds, struggled with low motivation, as the jobs available did not meet their expectations in terms of salary or career growth.
 - o **Mismatch of Skills and Local Job Markets:** The skills taught were not always aligned with the predominant industries in Keonjhar, leading to limited opportunities for local employment.



12. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made for improving the DDU-GKY program in Keonjhar:

- a. **Customization of Training Programs:** Training modules should be tailored to meet the specific needs of local industries. For example, skill development programs focusing on mining, agriculture, and allied sectors would be more relevant in Keonjhar than general retail or hospitality training.
- b. **Strengthening Industry Linkages:** There is a need for better coordination between training centres and local employers. Creating job fairs, industry partnerships, and placements drives would ensure better job outcomes for beneficiaries.
- c. **Improving Infrastructure and Resources:** Investment in better infrastructure and learning resources at training centres is essential. This would ensure that beneficiaries are equipped with the necessary tools and materials for high-quality learning.
- d. **Post-Training Support:** Providing post-placement support such as mentorship, career counselling, and skill upgradation would enhance job retention and career growth for DDU-GKY graduates.
- e. **Awareness and Motivation Building:** Increasing awareness about the benefits of skill development programs and providing motivational counselling would help to overcome the reluctance of some beneficiaries to participate fully in the training programs.

13. CONCLUSION

The pilot study highlights that DDU-GKY has shown promise in improving the skill levels and employability of rural youth in Keonjhar. However, the program's success is contingent upon several factors, including the alignment of training with local job market needs, the quality of training facilities, and the establishment of robust employer linkages. Addressing these challenges can significantly improve the outcomes of the program, leading to enhanced socio-economic development in the region. The study offers valuable insights for policymakers, training providers, and local stakeholders, urging them to tailor the program more effectively to local needs and ensure sustainable employment opportunities for rural youth in Odisha.

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