



Effectiveness and Barriers of Skill Development Programs for Youth in India: A Study with Reference to Aspirational Districts Balrampur and Siddhartha Nagar of Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

India's economic transformation is intricately tied to its ability to skill and employ its young population. The National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and other government led initiatives under the Skill India Mission aim to enhance employability and productivity by providing vocational training to youth, particularly women and marginalized groups. This paper examines two key aspects: (1) the effectiveness of these skill development programs in enabling employment among young people and (2) the barriers that prevent individuals from participating in such programs. Drawing upon secondary data, government reports, and field-based insights from Uttar Pradesh's aspirational districts Siddharthnagar and Balrampur. This study highlights that while skill development initiatives have significantly improved employability prospects, structural and socio-economic barriers such as limited accessibility, gender norms, inadequate infrastructure, and weak linkages with industries continue to impede equitable participation. The paper concludes with suggestions to enhance inclusivity and effectiveness in the implementation of India's skill development mission.

Keywords: Skill Development, NSQF, Youth, Employment, Barriers, Vocational Education

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India is marching forward with its young and energetic population to take on leadership in technology and global competitiveness. The buzzword, “Skill Development for Skilling India,” captures the government’s vision to skill 500 million people by 2022. Within this context, technical and vocational educations have become central pillars of economic development, serving as foundations for human capital enhancement. The Government of India’s launch of the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) represents a systematic approach to link school-level education with employable skills. It aims to ensure that skill development programs align with industry needs while fostering entrepreneurship, modernized agriculture, and a growing service economy. As Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam emphasized, the nation must leverage emerging economic avenues expanding domestic markets, self-employment, informal sectors, and technological innovation to shape its skill strategy. In aspirational districts such as Siddharthnagar and Balrampur (Uttar Pradesh), the NSQF and other government-led initiatives are providing youth, with avenues for employment and entrepreneurship. However, despite promising outcomes, multiple socio-economic and infrastructural challenges hinder the inclusivity and effectiveness of these programs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine how effectively the skill development programs are enabling employment for youth in Balrampur and Siddharthnagar.
2. To identify the barriers that hinder participation in these programs, including socio-economic and infrastructural challenges, accessibility, and success rates among targeted demographics.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a descriptive and analytical approach using secondary data from government publications (e.g., MSDE, NSDC, NITI Aayog), policy documents, and existing literature. It also includes case insights from Aspirational Districts in Uttar Pradesh, namely Siddharthnagar and Balrampur, to assess ground level realities. The study relies on data triangulation to examine both outcomes employment and inclusion and barriers access and participation.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Employment and Livelihood Creation

Skill development programs such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Uttar Pradesh Skill Development Mission (UPSDM), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) initiatives have

significantly contributed to job creation. Trained youth have found employment in diverse sectors including textiles, construction, healthcare, and IT services. In Uttar Pradesh, local training centers (ITI) under the NSQF framework have reported improved placement rates, particularly for youth with school level vocational training linked to specific industry needs.

Women Empowerment through Skills

Women's participation in vocational programs has led to increased income levels and enhanced social mobility. Programs focused on tailoring, food processing, and entrepreneurship have encouraged self-reliance. However, while participation rates have increased, gender disparity persists many women remain in informal sectors or home-based enterprises with limited scalability.

Youth and Entrepreneurship

Skill development has also fostered rural entrepreneurship. The emphasis on agriculture-related and non-farm skills has allowed youth to engage in mechanized farming, dairy, and service-oriented businesses. Despite these advances, the long-term sustainability of employment remains uncertain due to limited market access and weak post-training support systems.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Socio-economic Constraints

Socio-economic inequalities play a crucial role in determining access to skill programs. Rural poverty, family responsibilities, and opportunity costs are barriers of youth and women from joining training centers. Many participants lack financial stability to afford transportation or accommodation during training.

Gender Norms and Social Barriers

Traditional gender roles often restrict women's participation in training programs located far from home. In conservative rural settings, safety concerns, family pressure, and lack of female trainers further exacerbate exclusion.

Infrastructural and Institutional Limitations

Both aspirational districts, skill training centers suffer from inadequate infrastructure, shortage of qualified trainers, and outdated equipment. Poor connectivity and limited access to digital learning tools further marginalize remote learners.

Weak Industry Linkages

Although the NSQF aims to bridge the gap between training and employment, coordination between training institutions and industries remains limited. Many trainees struggle to find relevant employment due to mismatched skills and lack of job placement mechanisms.

Awareness and Accessibility Issues

Awareness about government schemes is often low among rural populations. Lack of community outreach and inadequate counseling services prevent potential beneficiaries from understanding the benefits of such programs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis indicates that while India's skill development framework has made substantial progress in mobilizing youth and industries, inclusivity remains a challenge. Programs have shown positive results in improving employability but require stronger monitoring, gender-sensitive design, and infrastructure expansion. In Uttar Pradesh's aspirational districts, local administration and NGOs can play a pivotal role in mobilizing youth however, sustained impact depends on improving quality training, digital access, and industry partnerships. The success of these programs lies not only in the number of trained individuals but in their ability to secure sustainable livelihoods.

CONCLUSION

The vision of a skilled India cannot be achieved without addressing structural inequalities that hinder participation. Effective policy implementation must focus on strengthening rural infrastructure, enhancing gender inclusion, and building stronger linkages between education, training, and employment. Integrating skill development within the broader framework of socio-economic empowerment particularly for women and rural youth will accelerate India's journey toward inclusive and sustainable growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Promote Gender Sensitive Training:** Establish safe, accessible, and flexible training spaces for women.
- ❖ **Strengthen local job Market specially for Women:** Align curriculum and certification with real job market requirements.
- ❖ **Enhance Awareness Campaigns:** Use local media and community mobilizers to improve scheme visibility.

- ❖ Digital Infrastructure Development: Promote digital literacy and online training platforms in rural areas.
- ❖ Monitoring and Evaluation: Implement transparent systems to assess the long-term employment outcomes of trainees.

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