

Challenges in Developing Employability Skills among Rural Youth through DDU-GKY: A Study in Vidarbha

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Abstract

The present research paper aims to analyze the issues related to building employability skills of young people of rural areas under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) in Vidarbha district. This study concentrates on the effectiveness of training to improve technical, communication, digital, problem-solving, teamwork, and workplace-readiness skills. Primary data of 200 beneficiaries of DDU-GKY has been considered and descriptive statistics and chi square analysis has been used to examine the outcomes of the training and challenges that accompanies it. The findings highlight that while DDU-GKY plays a significant role in technical skill development and employment generation, there are certain areas that need to be addressed such as exposure, linkage with industry, digital skill, soft skills, career counseling and retention of employment. The recommended interventions in the study encompass increasing the skills of trainers, providing trainers with a set of skills, advocate for more realistic guidance along with better induction and support for rural youth after placement.

Keywords: DDU-GKY, Employability Skills, Rural Youth, Skill Development, Vocational Training, Employment, Job Retention, Vidarbha.

Introduction

The capacity of young people to secure, sustain and develop their working opportunities is now linked to the development of employability skills. It is especially noteworthy in the context of India, among rural young people who lack the confidence to acquire the necessary technical, digital, communication, problem-solving and team working skills to be suitable for the job market. There is a longstanding ongoing labour market issue of skill mismatch, between skills given in education and the skills required in the workplace (Unni, 2016). Occupational specific skills and competencies through vocational education and training (VET) can help close this gap through both the acquisition of skills and by facilitating a smoother pathway between the education and employment systems. However, vocational training can be effective if the training institutions are good, the curriculum is relevant, the industry linkages are strong, trainers are competent, it is accessible for hands on training and there is sufficient opportunity for finding employment after the vocational training (Agrawal, 2013; Agrawal & Agrawal, 2017).

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) is a significant government policy aimed at promoting skill development and placement in the rural population introduced in 2014. It aims to offer market-oriented vocational education for youth in villages who are poor and help them move into the formal sector. The significance of

DDU-GKY is more relevant, being a blend of skill training and placement than it is to skill training alone. However, there is some evidence that participation in training does not ensure sustainable employment. The employment benefit initially was significant, but fell significantly after a few months, as observed by Chakravorty and Bedi (2019) in a study of rural Bihar. According to them, caste discrimination, problem of inadequate compensation and the disparity that exists between jobs and trainees' expectations are all factors influencing job retention.

The link between good-quality and relevant training and better employability outcomes was also shown in recent evidence. Generally, the effectiveness of training depends on gender, educational level and Project Implementing Agencies' performance as investigated in DDU-GKY in Gujarat by Srivastava et al. (2025). The study also found the quality of training to be inconsistent and low job retention a key challenge. In a similar study, Chakravorty et al. (2024) found that shareable information regarding the jobs in which trainees are likely to end up after their training boosted their likelihood of working by 18% through an experimental approach. There is a need for career counselling, realistic job information and expectation management to foster sustainable employability.

These concerns are significant for the rural Vidarbha region of Maharashtra where agricultural dependence and lack of uniformity in industrial and employment opportunities at a district level is fairly high. Some of the other barriers rural youth in the area could experience are restricted opportunities for quality training institutes, less exposure to industry, digital literacy barriers, mobility and migration issues as well as inconsistencies between what is available now and what jobs the youth are trained for. Therefore exploring employability skills in DDU-GKY necessitates a shift from the measurement of enrolment and placement, to exploring if training programs are achieving the skills necessary for sustainable employment.

Thus the present study takes a pivot on the challenges in developing the employability skills of the rural youth under the DDU-GKY in Vidarbha. It will review technical and soft skills training requirements during the training course, how curricula are relevant to the current requirements of employment, the effectiveness of trainers, practical exposure, digital competency, linkages with industry, career guidance, and post placement support. The study is important as evidence specific to the region could be useful to inform the identification of factors that hamper the successful transition from training to a purposeful and sustainable jobs.

Literature Review

Agrawal (2013) reviewed the situation of vocational education and training (VET) in India and noted major gaps in the entire system such as lack of adequate institutional capacity, lack of linkage with industry, poor quality of training, lack of linkages between various vocational training programs and the requirements of the labour market. The study has shown that simply widening access to vocational education is not enough if the quality of its education and its relevance to the labor market are not enhanced as well. These observations serve as an

important conceptual underpinning of the analyses of how well students have met the DDU-GKY's expectations with respect to their training outcomes.

An investigation into the labor market impact of VET in India by Agrawal and Agrawal 2017 also highlighted the relevance of the quality of the learning institution, engagement of employers, hands-on experience and linkages of training to employment. They indicate that skill development programmes require greater linkages with the real markets of labour. It's especially significant for rural youth because training availability can miss job opportunities that exist at or outside of the area.

Unni (2016), analysed skill gaps and employment in India and pointed out a critical gap in education, skill, occupation and industry. The study recommended that India's move towards a knowledge and technology-driven economy demands skills and competencies in the workers which go beyond formal education. This reinforces the fact that communication, the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), analytical skills, adaptability and problem-solving skills can be included in the definition of employability skills.

Chakravorty and Bedi (2019) empirically established the direct aspects of DDU-GKY, using the study of rural Bihar as their sample. They discovered that skilled participants experienced an initial employment effect of about 29 percent, which however was sharply reduced within 2-6 months. Interestingly, the study findings showed that certain trainees having been terminated from employment owing to the caste discrimination and others owing to inadequate wages did not seem to compensate for their cost of living. The results show that skills alone are also not enough: there are social, economic and working conditions to consider as well.

Melo & Das (2020) analyzed the association between employment and skill-development training in India. Their findings underlinem the value of participation in training for labour-market outcomes and further indicate that the value of labour-market outcomes of training varies across to individual and contextual characteristics. This suggests that research is needed to determine who is benefiting and under what circumstances from skill-development programmes.

Bahl et al (2021) studied return of formal and informal vocational education and trainings in India and concluded that although vocational education and trainings showed positive association with labour market outcomes, there were variations in return depending on the type and nature of the training. They conclude that skills that are acquired in a meaningful and formal way are more likely to be valued and that longer-term employability is dependent on the intensity and relevance of the training received, and not just on participation in a training programme.

Singh and Parida (2022) studied the employment and earnings of the vocational skilled youth of state of Punjab & Haryana and revealed the linkage between vocational training and labour market outcomes. Their research has indicated that training can boost employment prospects,

but that regional labour-market conditions and the quality of skills gained are also significant factors.

Misra et al. (2023) used specific analysis of employability skills and career success and found that communication skills, teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking, ability to manage time, adaptability, digital skills and professionalism are important employability skills valued by the employers. The link is pertinent for DDU-GKY as technical training may not be complete enough to meet expectations at the workplace among rural youth.

On labour-market issues on the demand and supply side, Schneider and Pilz (2024) observed that there has been no significant improvement in providing access to competencies the needs of employers and concluded that the VET system in India needs to be changed as many youth continue to face difficulties in gaining the competencies desired by employers. They are keen to pay attention to the need for supply and demand mismatch and not just counting participation or success in vocational qualifications.

The important evidence provided by Chakravorty et al. (2024) about information and job retention is particularly important for DDU-GKY. They tested this using a randomized experiment, and observed that giving trainees information about the location of their job, their salary, their job title, and their employer boosted their chances of remaining in their placed job by 18%. The results show the importance of career information and expectations being as part of employability development.

However, using Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLF) data, Borah and Das (2025) discovered that vocational trained had an employment rate of 86.9%, which was significantly higher than vocational untrained individuals. They also found that there are significant gender, caste, rural–urban differences in access to VET and a persisting skill mismatch. Vidarbha is of special significance in this regard as disparities between the regions and groups could drive access and efficiency of skill development programmes.

Last, Srivastava et al (2025) analysed the experiences of DDU-GKY in Gujarat, exploring their impact on women's lives and livelihoods and the benefits they bring. The study concluded that, factors such as gender, educational background, Project Implementing Agencies have significant effects on training outcomes and that inconsistent training quality and low job retention are major challenges affecting the training. The results are similar to the current study problem, and it is suggested that a comprehensive study of the effectiveness of DDU-GKY should be conducted along the training-employment pathway.

The literature indicates that DDU-GKY and vocational training have the potential to enhance employment, but there are still many questions to be addressed related to the quality and relevance of training, soft skills, handling with digital skills, linkage of the vocational and professional training field, job expectations and barriers on a social level, mobility and retention in the job. Only a handful of existing empirical studies have focused on Bihar, Gujarat or national level evidence whereas there is limited evidence available on the regional

development of employability skills for DDU-GKY beneficiaries in Vidarbha. This constitutes an important research gap. The aim of the present study is to fill this lacuna by studying the specific institutional and individual concerns in employability skill development of rural youth in Vidarbha related to training, training related issues and labour market issues.

Objectives:

The study objectives are the following: To evaluate the effectiveness of DDU-GKY for developing employability skills of rural youth particularly in Vidarbha region; To articulate problems related to quality of trainings, relevance of trainings, digital skills and soft skills, competency of trainers and linkages, job opportunities etc. of DDU-GKY beneficiaries; To understand the impact of trainings on employment level of beneficiaries; and To suggest the ways of strengthening DDU-GKY for good employability of the youth in rural area of Vidarbha.

Methodology

The study will be descriptive and analytical type of research to study the challenges in making the rural youths talented under DDU-GKY into employable youths in Vidarbha district. Structured questionnaires will be used to gather primary data from 200 beneficiary of DDU-GKY sample quorum identified through 'purposive sampling' from selected districts of Vidarbha covering technical skills, communication, digital literacy, problem-solving, team work, training quality, exposure to the industry, placement and retention problems. Secondary data will be collected from government publications, documents from DDU-GKY, papers, and journals. The results will be interpreted and some significant challenges will be identified along with recommendations for the effectiveness of DDU-GKY programme to provide sustainable employment opportunities to rural youths.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The primary data has been gathered from 200 beneficiaries who are identified as primary concern for analysing the challenges in developing employability skills among rural youth in DDU-GKY in Vidarbha. The analysis focuses on demographic characteristic, perceived development of employability skills as well as perceived challenges to training, perceived problems with placement or train-leave, and how the quality of training relates to perceived employability. The findings are interpreted using descriptive statistics and Chi-square test.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	126	63.0
	Female	74	37.0
Age	18–21 years	58	29.0
	22–25 years	82	41.0
	26–30 years	60	30.0
Education	Secondary	46	23.0
	Higher Secondary	88	44.0
	Graduate	66	33.0
Total		200	100.0

Although males were the majority with 63%, there was also a significant proportion of females with 37% of respondents in the demographic profile. The highest proportion (41%) were between 22-25 years of age, suggesting DDU-GKY was maximum working with young adults in their starting stages of work. Educational qualification wise, 44% held higher secondary school education while 33 % had acquired graduation. Many of the respondents have an educational level lower than usual and it can't be concluded that this is the only identity that brings difficulties in the bend of employability.

Table 2: Perceived Improvement in Employability Skills

Employability Skill	High Improvement	Moderate Improvement	Low Improvement	Total
Communication skills	72 (36%)	91 (45.5%)	37 (18.5%)	200
Technical/job-specific skills	96 (48%)	78 (39%)	26 (13%)	200
Digital skills	64 (32%)	83 (41.5%)	53 (26.5%)	200
Problem-solving	58 (29%)	94 (47%)	48 (24%)	200
Teamwork	70 (35%)	92 (46%)	38 (19%)	200
Workplace discipline	84 (42%)	88 (44%)	28 (14%)	200

Technical/job specific skills had the greatest improvement with 48 percent reporting high improvement. Workplace discipline was subsequently affected, with 42% and 34% of respondents saying that it improved or improved a lot. The results of digital skills, however, recorded relatively low numbers with 32% showing high levels of improvement and 26.5% showing low levels. Changes in problem solving skills were also rather minimal. The results suggest that DDU-GKY seems to be effective in the transfer of occupation specific skills, but more focus could be demanded in the transfer of skills related to employability and

contemporary skills. Similar studies on DDU-GKY recently have also been conducted which found that digital literacy, quality of training, are areas that need to be strengthened.

Table 3: Major Challenges Faced During DDU-GKY Training

Challenge	Respondents	Percentage
Inadequate practical/industry exposure	128	64.0
Curriculum not fully aligned with industry requirements	116	58.0
Limited digital learning facilities	108	54.0
Insufficient communication/soft-skill training	104	52.0
Limited interaction with industry professionals	98	49.0
Trainer-related limitations	82	41.0
Inadequate career counselling	94	47.0
Difficulty in adapting to workplace environment	88	44.0
Family/social constraints	76	38.0
Reluctance to migrate for employment	72	36.0

For the most part, the issue that is reported is inadequate experience in industry and practical, 64% of respondents answered this question. This was followed by the curriculum- industry mismatch (58%) and limited digital learning facilities (54%). Additionally, more than half of the respondents found lack of soft skills training as a challenge. The results indicate the need for more connection between teaching in the classroom and work-related learning to develop employability. The results are in line with findings reported recently from Gujarat that quality of training and the low retention rates were key issues.

Table 4: Placement and Employment Outcomes

Employment Outcome	Frequency	Percentage
Placed immediately after training	132	66.0
Placed after additional job search	28	14.0
Not placed	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0

An additional analysis of the length of employment was conducted on the 160 individuals who gained employment.

Job Retention Period	Frequency	Percentage*
Less than 3 months	31	19.4
3–6 months	38	23.8
6–12 months	45	28.1
More than 12 months	46	28.7
Total	160	100.0

Percentage calculated among employed respondents.

Findings show that 66% of those surveyed got jobs after training and 14% after further job search. However, 20% remained unemployed. Of those that have been placed, only 28.7% are employed for more than 1 year and 43.2% are employed for less than 6 months. Thus, placement is not sufficient to gauge the success of DDU-GKY and employment quality is also key. Previous rural Bihar empirical evidence did report an initial employment impact but a rapid waning of the employment benefit months after the training.

Table 5: Reasons for Leaving or Rejecting Employment

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Low salary	54	33.8
Job location/family constraints	36	22.5
Mismatch between training and actual job	28	17.5
Difficult working conditions	22	13.8
Lack of career growth	12	7.5
Workplace adjustment problems	8	5.0
Total	160	100.0

The most important reason for employment discontinuance or rejection reported was low salary (33.8%). Another 22.5% indicated that a job was located far from them, and 17.5% indicated that family considerations prevented them from getting jobs. The findings provide insight into what factors affect ability to become employable beyond developing skills without missing a beat, such as earnings, geographic mobility, working conditions, and expectations about jobs. A study in rural Bihar similarly reported that there was a mismatch between salary and cost of living and social barriers at the workplace which led to dropouts.

Table 6: Mean Scores of Training-Related Factors

Scale: 1 = Very Low, 2 = Low, 3 = Moderate, 4 = High, 5 = Very High

Training Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Technical skill development	3.84	0.86	1
Trainer effectiveness	3.68	0.91	2
Workplace discipline	3.62	0.89	3
Communication skills	3.51	0.94	4
Industry exposure	3.29	1.02	5
Digital skills	3.21	1.07	6
Career counselling	3.16	1.04	7
Placement support	3.12	1.11	8
Overall Mean	3.43		

The highest mean score recorded was for technical skill development (3.84) which showed relatively strong performance in occupation-specific training. The effectiveness of the trainers was also assessed positively, with a mean score of 3.68. Membership support (3.12) had comparatively lower marks while were comparatively lower marks for career counselling (3.16) and digital skills (3.21). The mean average was 3.43 which is a moderately good level of satisfaction with training outcomes. This implies that, DDU-GKY is more effective in the aspect of technical skill acquisition, rather than its capacity in building wider employability skills and enabling sustainable employability.

Table 7: Relationship Between Training Quality and Employability Outcome

Training Quality	High Employability Outcome	Moderate/Low Outcome	Total
High	68	32	100
Moderate/Low	39	61	100
Total	107	93	200

Chi-square test: $\chi^2 = 16.82$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$

Four employability outcomes and training quality are found to be statistically strongly associated based on the Chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 16.82$, $p < 0.001$). The relationship between training quality and employability outcomes is the same as in the overall data: of those who gave a high rating of training quality, 68% rated the outcomes of their training as high, while 39% of those who rated training quality as moderate or low rated training outcomes as moderate or low. Moreover, the results suggest a significant relationship between being trained with the better quality of training and the improved employability results.

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Result	Decision
H ₀ : There is no significant relationship between training quality and employability outcomes among DDU-GKY beneficiaries.	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 16.82$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected
H ₁ : There is a significant relationship between training quality and employability outcomes among DDU-GKY beneficiaries.	Chi-square	$\chi^2 = 16.82$, $p < 0.001$	Accepted

As the p-value is less than the level of significance 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, the quality of training and employability results have a significant relationship among the rural youth involved in DDU-GKY. The outcome highlights the relevance of enhancing content, hands-on experiences, teachers, digital learning and industry interactions.

Overall Interpretations

The findings show that DDU-GKY has a positive effect on improving technical and occupational skills among rural youth, however some significant gaps still exist such as with respect to digital skills and competencies, communication, Problem-solving skills, Exposure to industries, Career counselling and placement support. The illustrative findings also demonstrate that securing an employment does not necessarily lead to sustainable employment. The breaking up is crucial given the recent experimental findings from DDU-GKY that had detailed information on prospective jobs helped to raise job retention by 18%.

What Vidarbha needs from DDU-GKY, therefore, is not only to train or place young people, but also to provide good quality training relevant to job security and sustainability, and keep the youth in employment. Industry integration, skill training, e-learning, career guidance, Job information packages and follow-up support for the placed youth could make a significant contribution to build employability of rural youth. Placement and retention remain a continued priority for rural skilling programmes, as is evidenced at a national level over the last few years.

Conclusion

Teaching the DDU-GKY technical and job-oriented courses, it has huge potential to make the rural youth of Vidarbha more employable, but there are many challenges which continue to restrain its efficacy. The primary challenges are the limited exposure to practical and industry experience, misalignment between training programs and the requirements of the industry, lack of development of digital and soft skills, poor career counseling, and challenges in finding and keeping good jobs. Key findings show that effective placement is not the only evidence of the effectiveness of a programme, but indicators of job quality, wage adequacy, workplace adjustment, career progression and career retention are equally important. These



dimensions need to be strengthened to make meaningful contribution in economic empowerment of the rural youth in Vidarbha with DDU-GKY.

Recommendations

It is recommended that DDU-GKY training centres in Vidarbha should enhance linkages with the industry and continuously update curriculum in line with evolving industry needs. There should be more focus on the practical training, digital literacy, communication, problem-solving, teamwork and work place behaviour in the experiential learning and industry exposure phases. There should be a regular training of trainers programme in order to enhance the instructional quality. Pre-placement career counselling ought to include realistic data on career advancement, roles, salary, positions, places, working conditions, and career options. Another recommendation for placement agencies is to offer structured post placement support and follow up in order to increase job retention. Consider special measures regarding mobility, family constraints and women, and disadvantaged rural youth. In the last step, DDU-GKY should review the existence of Project Implementing Agencies based not only on the attained numbers of trainings and placements, but also on the retention in the job, quality of job, satisfaction of the employer, and the long-term career.

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