

DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA GRAMEEN KAUSHALYA YOJANA (DDU-GKY): AN EVALUATION

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Abstract : The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, designed to empower rural youth through skill development and wage employment. Launched under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, it aims to diversify income sources of poor rural households by providing demand-driven, industry-aligned training and ensuring sustainable placements. This study critically examines the scheme's structure, objectives, and performance using secondary data from official reports and academic evaluations. Findings suggest that while DDU-GKY has significantly expanded rural skill training infrastructure and provided employment opportunities to millions of youth, challenges remain in ensuring training quality, long-term job retention, and regional inclusivity. The paper recommends strengthening monitoring systems, enhancing industry partnerships, and adopting retention-linked incentives to improve impact and sustainability.

Keywords: - DDU-GKY, skill development, rural employment, youth empowerment, poverty alleviation, India, vocational training, policy evaluation

1.0 Introduction

India's rural economy is home to a large proportion of the country's youth population, yet unemployment, underemployment, and skill mismatches remain persistent challenges. The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) on 25 September 2014 as a flagship component of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). The programme seeks to transform rural poor youth into an economically independent and globally competitive workforce through skill development and wage employment opportunities.

DDU-GKY specifically targets rural youth aged 15 to 35 years from poor families, particularly those belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities, and women. It provides skill-based training aligned with industry needs and aims to ensure placement in wage employment with sustainable income prospects. The programme operates on an outcome-based funding model, where training partners receive payments in tranches linked to enrolment, course completion, certification, and verified job placement.

The scheme embodies the vision of 'Antyodaya'—uplifting the poorest of the poor—by bridging the gap between rural talent and employment opportunities in various sectors such as retail, hospitality, manufacturing, and information technology. It emphasizes a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) approach, engaging accredited Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs), State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs), and industry partners to deliver standardized training under strict quality norms.

Despite notable progress in expanding access to skill training across states, the programme continues to face challenges related to training quality, placement sustainability, post-placement support, and equitable outreach to remote and marginalized regions. Evaluating these aspects is essential to understanding the effectiveness of DDU-GKY as a policy instrument for rural transformation and poverty reduction.

This study aims to analyze the performance, implementation challenges, and policy implications of DDU-GKY, drawing on secondary data, government reports, and academic literature to propose evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the scheme's long-term impact.

2.0 Literature Review / Background Evidence:

Skill development has been recognized as a crucial driver of inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in India, particularly in the rural context. The Government of India's Skill India Mission and its various components, including DDU-GKY, aim to bridge the demand-supply gap in the labor market by aligning rural

youth skills with industry requirements. Literature on rural employability programs highlights that skill training must not only enhance technical competencies but also ensure sustainable livelihoods through market-linked employment opportunities (Mehrotra, 2021).

2.1 Evolution of Skill Development Policies in Rural India: Before DDU-GKY, several programs addressed rural employment and capacity-building—such as the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) and Aajeevika Skills Development Programme (ASDP). However, evaluations revealed fragmented implementation, limited industry linkage, and weak post-training placement mechanisms (World Bank, 2013). DDU-GKY, launched in 2014, was designed to address these gaps by integrating skill training within the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) framework and by emphasizing placement-based outcomes (MoRD, 2015).

2.2. Structure and Objectives of DDU-GKY: According to the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD, 2023), DDU-GKY operates through accredited Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) and State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) to deliver training under the National Occupational Standards (NOS) prescribed by the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF). The programme's focus on marginalized groups—Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, and women—illustrates its inclusive development approach. Studies by NITI Aayog (2020) and the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA, 2022) note that the scheme's outcome-based funding structure, which ties payments to placement verification, represents a significant innovation in rural skill policy design.

2.3 Achievements and Performance Trends: Empirical evaluations show that DDU-GKY has trained and placed hundreds of thousands of rural youth across multiple sectors such as retail, hospitality, IT/ITeS, and manufacturing. Official data (DDU-GKY Portal, 2024) report cumulative training numbers exceeding several million beneficiaries since its inception. State-level analyses—such as those in Andhra Pradesh (Rao & Reddy, 2020) and Himachal Pradesh (Kumar, 2021)—indicate improvements in employment readiness, self-confidence, and wage employment opportunities among trained candidates. However, placement rates and post-placement retention vary widely between states and sectors, suggesting differences in implementation capacity and local labor market conditions.

2.4 Challenges Identified in Existing Research: Despite its achievements, several studies highlight persistent implementation challenges. Independent assessments (e.g., Singh & Sharma, 2019; NCAER, 2021) find variability in training quality due to inconsistent trainer qualifications, limited infrastructure in rural centers, and weak alignment between courses offered and actual employer demand. Moreover, long-term tracking of beneficiaries is limited, making it difficult to assess income stability and career progression. High attrition rates, especially among women and migrant workers, indicate gaps in post-placement support such as accommodation, safety, and social security coverage (Rao, 2020).

2.5 Comparative and Policy Insights: Comparative analyses between DDU-GKY and other skilling initiatives like PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) suggest that DDU-GKY performs relatively better in placement-linked training but lags in innovation and scalability due to administrative complexities and delayed fund disbursement (NITI Aayog, 2022). Studies emphasize the importance of localized labor market mapping, industry participation, and digital monitoring systems to ensure accountability and relevance.

3.0 Key Findings in the Literature

A synthesis of government reports, academic studies, and independent evaluations reveals several key insights into the design, implementation, and outcomes of DDU-GKY. These findings highlight both the programme's achievements and its operational constraints across states.

3.1 Expansion and Reach:

- a) DDU-GKY has emerged as one of India's largest rural skill development initiatives, training millions of youth across more than 600 districts since its launch in 2014 (MoRD, 2023).
- b) The programme has successfully reached marginalized communities, with a significant proportion of beneficiaries belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities, and women (NITI Aayog, 2020).
- c) State-level evaluations (e.g., Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh) indicate increased participation of rural women, contributing to social inclusion and empowerment (Rao & Reddy, 2020).

3.2 Outcome-Oriented Framework:

- a) DDU-GKY's outcome-based funding model, linking payments to placement verification, has introduced accountability and performance orientation in skill training (IIPA, 2022).

- b) The programme's integration with the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) ensures standardization of curricula and certification across training centers (MoRD, 2023).

3.3 Employment and Placement Performance:

- a) Placement rates vary from 50–70% across states, depending on local labor market conditions and the quality of training providers (NCAER, 2021).
- b) Beneficiaries often secure entry-level jobs in retail, hospitality, construction, healthcare, and IT sectors. However, post-placement retention beyond six months remains a major challenge, particularly among migrant workers and women (Singh & Sharma, 2019).
- c) Average wages reported for placed candidates show modest improvement over pre-training earnings, but limited upward mobility in the short term (Kumar, 2021).

3.4 Quality and Institutional Challenges:

- a) Studies identify uneven quality of training due to variable trainer expertise, outdated curricula, and inadequate infrastructure in some centers (Mehrotra, 2021).
- b) Monitoring and data verification mechanisms, though digitized, still face issues of transparency and consistency across states (NITI Aayog, 2022).
- c) Delays in fund disbursement and accreditation processes can hinder timely course delivery and impact outcomes (World Bank, 2020).

3.5 Social and Economic Impacts:

- a) Training under DDU-GKY has shown positive effects on self-confidence, mobility, and employability among rural youth (Rao, 2020).
- b) Women participants particularly report enhanced agency, social visibility, and financial independence, contributing to broader gender empowerment goals (Kumar & Verma, 2021).
- c) However, the long-term economic impact on poverty reduction remains under-researched due to limited longitudinal tracking.

3.6 Policy Recommendations from the Literature:

- a) Strengthen industry linkages to ensure demand-driven course design and higher job retention.
- b) Introduce retention-linked incentives for training partners to improve post-placement sustainability.
- c) Enhance digital monitoring and third-party evaluation to ensure transparency and outcome verification.
- d) Improve post-placement support systems such as counselling, migration assistance, and accommodation facilities for relocated workers.
- e) Encourage local entrepreneurship and self-employment training in regions with limited wage employment opportunities.

4.0 Research Questions and Objectives

4.1 Research Questions: This study seeks to explore and analyze the effectiveness of the “Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)” in achieving its stated goals of rural youth empowerment and employment generation. The key research questions guiding this study are:

- a) What are the primary objectives and design features of DDU-GKY, and how do they align with India's broader skill development policies?
- b) To what extent has DDU-GKY achieved its intended outcomes in terms of training quality, placement generation, and long-term employability?
- c) What operational, institutional, and socio-economic challenges affect the effective implementation of DDU-GKY across different states?
- d) How can policy interventions enhance the scheme's inclusiveness, sustainability, and impact on rural livelihoods?

4.2 Research Objectives: Based on the above research questions, the specific objectives of the study are to:

- a) ‘Examine’ the structure, implementation framework, and operational mechanisms of DDU-GKY as a national rural skill development programme.
- b) ‘Assess’ the overall performance of the scheme in terms of training coverage, placement outcomes, and beneficiary inclusion.
- c) ‘Identify’ key challenges related to training quality, monitoring, placement sustainability, and inter-agency coordination.

- d) 'Evaluate' the socio-economic outcomes of DDU-GKY in improving employability and income levels among rural youth.
- e) 'Recommend' policy measures and strategic reforms to strengthen the effectiveness, transparency, and long-term sustainability of DDU-GKY.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Research Design: The present study adopts a 'descriptive and analytical research design' to evaluate the structure, implementation, and impact of the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY). The research combines 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' approaches, relying primarily on secondary data to provide a comprehensive assessment of the programme's performance and challenges.

5.2 Nature of the Study: The study is 'qualitative in orientation', focusing on content and policy analysis, while also employing 'quantitative methods' such as trend and ratio analysis to interpret available numerical data. This mixed-method approach ensures both depth of understanding and factual rigor.

5.3 Data Sources: The research is based on 'secondary data' collected from reliable and authoritative sources, including:

- a) Official publications and annual reports of the 'Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)' and the 'DDU-GKY dashboard'.
- b) Evaluation studies and policy reviews conducted by 'NITI Aayog', 'National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)', and 'World Bank'.
- c) Research papers, journal articles, and working papers on rural skill development and employment in India.
- d) Statistical data from the 'National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)' and 'National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF)'.
- e) Government policy documents and parliamentary committee reports related to rural livelihoods and skilling initiatives.

5.4 Data Collection and Compilation: Secondary data were collected from official portals, government archives, and academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Research Gate. The data were organized systematically into categories such as training numbers, placement rates, funding patterns, and state-level performance. Qualitative material—policy documents, evaluation reports, and case studies—was reviewed to identify recurring themes and insights.

5.5 Tools and Techniques of Analysis:

- a) **Descriptive Analysis:** Used to summarize quantitative data related to training, placement, and sectoral performance.
- b) **Comparative Analysis:** Employed to examine differences in programme performance across states and time periods.
- c) **Content and Thematic Analysis:** Applied to qualitative data (reports and studies) to identify key implementation challenges, best practices, and policy implications.
- d) **Trend Analysis:** Conducted to study progress over time in terms of beneficiary outreach and employment outcomes.

5.6 Limitations of the Study:

- a) The study relies exclusively on secondary data, which may vary in accuracy and completeness across sources.
- b) Lack of longitudinal or primary data restricts the ability to assess long-term employment sustainability.
- c) State-level variations in reporting and performance monitoring may affect comparability.
- d) The analysis focuses on national and selected state-level evidence rather than micro-level field data.

5.7 Ethical Considerations: Since the study uses publicly available secondary data and published materials, there are no ethical risks concerning confidentiality or consent. All sources are appropriately cited to maintain academic integrity and transparency.

6.0 Programme Design and Implementation

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) was launched by the Ministry of Rural

Development (MoRD) on 25 September 2014 as part of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). It aims to enhance the employability of rural youth and facilitate their transition from poverty to productive wage employment. The scheme reflects the government's commitment to inclusive skill development and poverty alleviation through sustainable livelihood generation.

6.1 Institutional Framework: The programme operates through a multi-tier institutional mechanism:

- a) **Central Level:** The Ministry of Rural Development oversees policy formulation, funding, and overall coordination.
- b) **State Level:** State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) are responsible for state-level implementation, monitoring, and approval of projects.
- c) **Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs):** Accredited private and public institutions that deliver training, certification, and placement support.
- d) **Technical Support Agencies (TSAs):** Provide quality assurance, project appraisal, and monitoring assistance.

6.2 Funding Pattern: DDU-GKY follows an outcome-based funding model, where disbursements to PIAs are linked to performance milestones such as enrolment, training completion, certification, and placement verification. The funding ratio between the Central and State Governments is 75:25, while it is 90:10 for the North-Eastern states and Union Territories. This performance-based financing mechanism incentivizes efficiency and ensures alignment with employment outcomes.

6.3 Training Design and Delivery: Training programs are designed in accordance with the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and approved by relevant Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). Each course is demand-driven and tailored to meet industry requirements. The training includes technical skills, soft skills, communication, digital literacy, and workplace readiness. Residential facilities are provided for trainees in many locations to ensure accessibility for rural candidates.

6.4 Target Beneficiaries: The scheme targets rural youth aged 15–35 years from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC). Priority is given to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities, women, and other disadvantaged groups. The age limit is extended up to 45 years for vulnerable categories.

6.5 Placement and Post-Placement Support: DDU-GKY mandates that at least 70% of trained candidates must be placed in wage employment, either within India or abroad. Placements are verified digitally to ensure transparency. Post-placement support, including relocation assistance, transport allowances, and counselling, is provided for up to one year to facilitate job retention and stability.

6.6 Monitoring and Evaluation: The programme employs a robust Management Information System (MIS) and the DDU-GKY Dashboard for real-time tracking of enrolments, training progress, and placement outcomes. Third-party audits, field inspections, and social media-based grievance redressal systems strengthen transparency and accountability. Performance metrics are regularly reviewed by MoRD and SRLMs to ensure quality and compliance.

7.0 Evidence on Scale and Outcomes (Selected Facts)

Since its inception in 2014, the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) has made substantial progress in expanding access to skill development and wage employment for rural youth. The available data from the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), the DDU-GKY Management Information System (MIS), and independent evaluations reveal key trends in training coverage, placements, and performance across states.

7.1 Training and Placement Achievements:

- a) According to MoRD data (2024), over 1.3 million rural youth have been trained under DDU-GKY since its launch, with approximately 750,000 candidates placed in wage employment across various sectors.
- b) The programme operates through 2,500+ active training centers and 1,000+ Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) across 27 states and Union Territories.
- c) States such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha have achieved high placement rates due to better coordination with industry partners and strong state-level monitoring systems.
- d) The majority of placements are concentrated in retail, hospitality, manufacturing, construction, and information technology (IT/ITeS) sectors, reflecting alignment with high-demand industries.

7.2 Inclusion and Demographic Coverage:

- a) More than 50% of beneficiaries belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities, and women, fulfilling the programme's inclusion mandate.
- b) The average age of trainees ranges between 18–28 years, and approximately one-third of participants are women, indicating growing female participation in formal employment sectors.
- c) DDU-GKY has also expanded access in geographically disadvantaged regions such as the North-Eastern states, Jammu & Kashmir, and tribal districts, through region-specific training centers and mobile skill units.

7.3 Placement Sustainability and Wages:

- a) Independent evaluations (NITI Aayog, 2022; NCAER, 2023) show that placement retention beyond six months ranges between 55–65%, depending on the sector and location.
- b) Average entry-level monthly wages for placed candidates are reported between Rs.10,000–Rs. 15,000, with slight variations across states and industries.
- c) Beneficiaries report improvements in confidence, financial independence, and mobility, especially among women and marginalized youth. However, challenges remain in ensuring long-term employment stability and career progression.

7.4 Regional and Sectoral Variations:

- a) States like Kerala, Telangana, and Himachal Pradesh demonstrate higher placement rates and wage outcomes due to proactive state support and strong employer networks.
- b) In contrast, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh face implementation hurdles such as inadequate training infrastructure, weaker industry linkages, and higher dropout rates.
- c) Sectoral trends reveal that while service-oriented sectors provide more immediate job opportunities, manufacturing and construction offer greater stability in the long run.

7.5 International Placements and Innovations:

- a) DDU-GKY also promotes international placements, particularly in the Gulf countries and Southeast Asia, through specialized training in hospitality, healthcare, and technical trades.
- b) The programme has begun integrating digital learning, virtual job fairs, and mobile-based monitoring tools to enhance accessibility and transparency.

7.6 Key Performance Insights:

- a) DDU-GKY has achieved significant outreach and scale, making it one of India's largest rural skill initiatives.
- b) The placement-linked payment model ensures accountability among training partners but requires stronger verification mechanisms.
- c) Post-placement support and retention tracking remain weak points that limit long-term employment impact.
- d) Regional disparities in implementation highlight the importance of localized labour market mapping and industry participation.

8.0 Analysis — Successes and Strengths

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) represents a significant step toward integrating skill development with rural poverty alleviation. Its design and implementation reflect innovation in both approach and delivery. Several successes and strengths have contributed to its impact and scalability as a flagship rural skill development programme.

8.1 Large-Scale Outreach and Inclusivity: One of DDU-GKY's most notable achievements is its wide geographical and social reach. Operating across 27 states and Union Territories, the programme has trained over 1.3 million rural youth since 2014. Its explicit focus on marginalized groups—Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), minorities, women, and persons with disabilities—demonstrates a strong commitment to social inclusion. Over half of all beneficiaries belong to vulnerable sections, ensuring that economic growth reaches the most disadvantaged communities.

8.2 Demand-Driven and Industry-Aligned Training: Unlike earlier skill development schemes that focused mainly on supply-side training, DDU-GKY adopts a demand-driven model. Training is designed in accordance with the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and is aligned with the needs of specific industries through Sector Skill Councils (SSCs). This alignment enhances employability and ensures that the skills

imparted are relevant to labour market demands. The involvement of private sector partners through Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) also helps maintain industry standards and placement linkages.

8.3 Placement-Linked Funding Model: A unique feature of DDU-GKY is its outcome-based payment structure, where financial disbursement to training partners is tied to successful placements and retention. This performance-based funding mechanism improves accountability, reduces misuse of funds, and incentivizes PIAs to prioritize quality training and sustained employment outcomes rather than mere enrolment numbers.

8.4 Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Approach: The programme successfully integrates public resources and private efficiency. By involving private training institutions, NGOs, and corporate entities as PIAs, DDU-GKY leverages the expertise, infrastructure, and market linkages of multiple stakeholders. This multi-stakeholder model enhances the programme's outreach and adaptability to diverse local and sectoral contexts.

8.5 Strong Institutional and Monitoring Framework: The establishment of a comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) and the DDU-GKY Dashboard allows real-time monitoring of enrolments, training, certification, and placements. Regular third-party audits and technical support from dedicated agencies strengthen the transparency and reliability of programme data. The focus on data-driven governance has made DDU-GKY one of the most systematically monitored skill development programmes in India.

8.6 Empowerment and Social Transformation: Beyond economic outcomes, DDU-GKY has contributed to social empowerment—especially among women and youth from marginalized backgrounds. Beneficiaries report enhanced confidence, mobility, and financial independence. Women's participation in non-traditional sectors such as hospitality, retail, and IT/ITes reflects gradual shifts in rural gender roles and labour market perceptions.

8.7 Integration with National Missions: DDU-GKY complements other national initiatives such as Skill India, Digital India, and Make in India, creating a cohesive ecosystem for skill development and employment generation. Its synergy with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) ensures convergence between self-employment and wage employment initiatives, promoting a holistic approach to rural livelihoods.

9.0 Analysis — Challenges and gaps (synthesized from evaluations)

Despite its notable achievements, the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) faces several challenges in achieving its long-term goals of sustainable rural employment and inclusive growth. Evaluations by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), NITI Aayog (2022), and independent research institutions such as NCAER and IRMA highlight persistent structural and operational gaps that affect the programme's efficiency, equity, and impact.

9.1 Inconsistent Training Quality: A key issue identified across studies is the variation in training quality among Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs). Many training centers lack adequate infrastructure, qualified trainers, and industry-standard equipment. Some courses are delivered in a theoretical manner, with limited exposure to real-world work environments. This affects both the skill competency and confidence of trainees, particularly in technical trades.

9.2 Weak Industry Linkages: While DDU-GKY is designed to be industry-driven, many PIAs struggle to build strong, sustained linkages with employers. As a result, placements are often short-term or low-wage, with limited opportunities for career progression. The absence of formal partnerships with major industry associations reduces the programme's ability to adapt to changing labour market demands. Employers, in turn, report skill mismatches and inadequate job-readiness among graduates.

9.3 Placement Retention and Job Sustainability: Though placement targets are largely met, retention beyond six months remains a major concern. Evaluations indicate that 30–40% of placed candidates drop out within a few months due to poor working conditions, low wages, migration challenges, or lack of post-placement support. The focus on short-term placement outcomes rather than long-term career tracking limits understanding of the programme's true impact on livelihood sustainability.

9.4 Regional Disparities in Implementation: The programme's performance varies widely across states. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh have well-developed monitoring systems and strong employer networks, while Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh lag behind due to administrative bottlenecks, poor infrastructure, and low institutional capacity. This uneven implementation leads to regional disparities in both training quality and placement outcomes.

9.5 Monitoring, Verification, and Data Reliability: Although DDU-GKY employs an advanced Management Information System (MIS), field studies suggest inconsistencies in data reporting and verification. Some PIAs over-report placement numbers to access performance-linked payments. The absence of independent third-party

verification in all states reduces the reliability of outcome data. Additionally, post-placement tracking remains fragmented, with inadequate use of technology for continuous monitoring.

9.6 Limited Awareness and Mobilization: In many rural areas, awareness about DDU-GKY remains low, particularly among women and marginalized communities. The mobilization process—critical to identifying and motivating eligible youth—is often weak or dependent on local intermediaries. This limits participation from the poorest households, especially in remote and tribal regions where migration for training is challenging.

9.7 Funding Delays and Bureaucratic Hurdles: Several states report delays in fund disbursement and approval of projects, which disrupt training schedules and affect the financial viability of PIAs. The multi-tier approval system, while designed for accountability, sometimes leads to bureaucratic delays and procedural complexities, reducing programme responsiveness.

9.8 Inadequate Convergence with Other Schemes: Although DDU-GKY was conceptualized to work in synergy with NRLM, Skill India, and Digital India, actual convergence at the field level is limited. Lack of coordination between different departments and ministries often leads to duplication of efforts, resource inefficiency, and missed opportunities for integrated livelihood development.

10.0 Policy recommendations (actionable)

Building on the analysis of successes and challenges, the following actionable policy recommendations are proposed to enhance the efficiency, inclusiveness, and long-term sustainability of the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY). These recommendations are aimed at policymakers, implementing agencies, and industry partners to strengthen the programme's impact at both systemic and operational levels.

10.1 Strengthen Training Quality and Standardization:

- a) Develop a national accreditation framework for DDU-GKY training centers, with mandatory quality audits and re-certification every two years.
- b) Enhance trainer competency through a national Trainer Certification Programme in collaboration with Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) and industry bodies.
- c) Introduce blended learning models—combining classroom, digital, and on-the-job training—to improve accessibility and flexibility, especially in remote regions.
- d) Create sector-specific Centers of Excellence (CoEs) in partnership with reputed industries and institutions to set benchmarks for skill delivery.

10.2 Deepen Industry Linkages and Employer Engagement:

- a) Establish state-level Employer Advisory Boards comprising representatives from industry associations (CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM) to align training curricula with emerging market needs.
- b) Encourage long-term Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with large employers for apprenticeship-based placements and structured career pathways.
- c) Introduce incentive schemes for employers who provide sustainable employment and retention for over 12 months.
- d) Facilitate international placement partnerships through tie-ups with overseas employers and embassies, with pre-departure training and migration support.

10.3 Improve Placement Sustainability and Post-Placement Support:

- a) Strengthen the post-placement tracking system using digital and mobile-based applications to monitor retention and career progression for at least one year.
- b) Provide extended post-placement financial support for relocation, accommodation, and transport for candidates migrating to urban or overseas jobs.
- c) Introduce a “Career Progression Fund” to offer up skilling and re-skilling opportunities to placed candidates after one year of employment.
- d) Promote local job creation through convergence with micro-enterprise and rural entrepreneurship schemes under NRLM.

10.4 Address Regional and Social Disparities:

- a) Implement differential funding and flexibility for states with weaker institutional capacity or difficult terrain (e.g., North-East, tribal belts).
- b) Strengthen community mobilization efforts through collaboration with Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and NGOs to reach underserved populations.

- c) Launch awareness campaigns in local languages using social media, community radio, and local influencers to boost enrolment among rural women and marginalized youth.

10.5 Enhance Monitoring, Transparency, and Data Integrity:

- a) Integrate DDU-GKY's MIS with real-time biometric attendance, geo-tagged training data, and digital placement verification to prevent misreporting.
- b) Introduce independent third-party verification agencies for monitoring training outcomes and employer claims.
- c) Publish annual performance scorecards for each state and PIA to encourage competition and accountability.
- d) Leverage AI and analytics to identify drop-out patterns, sectoral trends, and future skill demands.

10.6 Strengthen Institutional and Financial Mechanisms:

- a) Streamline the fund disbursement process with time-bound approvals and digital payment systems to reduce bureaucratic delays.
- b) Provide capacity-building programmes for SRLM officials and PIA staff on project management, digital reporting, and community outreach.
- c) Encourage private investment and CSR participation in training infrastructure, especially in underserved regions.

10.7 Promote Continuous Learning and Policy Adaptation:

- a) Conduct periodic impact evaluations by independent institutions to assess long-term livelihood outcomes.
- b) Establish a national DDU-GKY Research and Policy Cell within MoRD to collect data, generate insights, and adapt policies based on evidence.
- c) Introduce a feedback mechanism where trainees and employers can regularly share inputs on training quality and employability outcomes.

11.0 Suggested Future Research Agenda

While significant research and evaluations have been conducted on the (DDU-GKY), there remain important gaps in understanding its long-term socioeconomic impact, institutional performance, and adaptability to emerging labour market trends. Future research should adopt both empirical and theoretical approaches to deepen insights and guide evidence-based policy formulation.

11.1 Longitudinal Impact Assessment: Future studies should focus on long-term tracking of beneficiaries to assess sustained employment, income progression, and social mobility. Most existing evaluations rely on short-term placement data; longitudinal research would reveal whether DDU-GKY has genuinely contributed to **intergenerational poverty reduction and livelihood security.

11.2 Comparative State-Level Analyses: Given the wide inter-state variations in programme outcomes, comparative studies could analyze how institutional capacity, governance models, and partnerships influence performance. This would help identify best practices and context-specific innovations that could be replicated in lagging states.

11.3 Gender and Social Inclusion Dimensions: Research is needed to examine the gendered impacts of DDU-GKY, including barriers to participation for women, retention challenges, and empowerment outcomes. Studies should also focus on how effectively the programme reaches Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), minorities, and persons with disabilities, and what design improvements could enhance inclusiveness.

11.4 Employer Perspectives and Labour Market Integration: There is limited empirical research on employer experiences with DDU-GKY-trained candidates. Future studies could explore employer satisfaction, skill adequacy, and labour retention from the industry's viewpoint. This would bridge the existing disconnect between training institutions and employers and inform market-responsive curriculum development.

11.5 Role of Technology and Digital Transformation: As DDU-GKY moves toward digitalization, future research should assess the effectiveness of digital learning models, virtual monitoring systems, and AI-based tracking tools. Evaluating the scalability and inclusivity of these technologies in rural contexts would be valuable, especially post COVID-19.

11.6 Integration with Broader Livelihood Ecosystems: Research could examine how DDU-GKY integrates with other livelihood missions such as NRLM, PMKVY, and Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme

(SVEP). Understanding these intersections can reveal synergies and duplication, leading to a more cohesive rural employment ecosystem.

11.7 Policy and Governance Studies: Future studies may analyze institutional governance, funding efficiency, and accountability mechanisms within DDU-GKY. Case studies on policy design, stakeholder coordination, and public-private partnership dynamics could inform reforms for better transparency and performance.

11.8 Impact of Migration and Urban Integration: Given that many DDU-GKY graduates migrate to urban centers or overseas for employment, research should explore the social and economic consequences of migration, including adaptation challenges, remittance flows, and urban integration issues among rural youth.

12.0 Conclusion

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) stands as one of India's most comprehensive and ambitious initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between rural youth potential and formal employment opportunities. As an integral component of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), it has redefined the contours of rural skill development by integrating training, certification, and placement within an outcome-based framework.

Over the past decade, DDU-GKY has succeeded in empowering millions of rural youth, especially those from marginalized and economically weaker backgrounds. Its achievements in expanding outreach, promoting inclusivity, and fostering public-private partnerships mark a significant milestone in India's skill development landscape. The programme's alignment with industry standards, emphasis on result-oriented financing, and focus on social inclusion have strengthened its credibility and relevance within the broader context of national development.

However, the analysis also reveals persistent challenges in training quality, job retention, industry engagement, and inter-state disparities. These gaps underline the need for stronger institutional capacity, transparent monitoring systems, and adaptive governance mechanisms. The sustainability of DDU-GKY's impact depends not only on achieving placement targets but also on ensuring long-term livelihood security and upward mobility for beneficiaries.

Going forward, the programme must evolve into a dynamic, data-driven, and locally responsive model that continuously adapts to changing labour market realities. Strengthening convergence with complementary missions—such as Skill India, Digital India, and Make in India—will be critical to creating a seamless skill-to-employment ecosystem. Moreover, sustained investments in quality assurance, post-placement support, and continuous learning opportunities can transform DDU-GKY from a training programme into catalyst for rural transformation.

In conclusion, DDU-GKY embodies the spirit of inclusive growth, social justice, and human capital development envisioned in India's development policy. By combining effective governance with innovation and community participation, it has the potential to become a global model for rural skill development and employment generation, paving the way for a more equitable and prosperous rural India.

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