

Skill Development Schemes and Employability Enhancement for Rural College Girls: A Policy Review

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Abstract

This study examines the relevance and outcomes of major skill development programs in promoting the employability of rural female college students in Punjab, using the experiences of Mata Sundri Girls College, Dhade, Bathinda, as a case reference. Key government initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), Udaan, and the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) are assessed in relation to gender equity and rural development goals. The review highlights that while these schemes offer considerable opportunities, their impact on rural women can be significantly improved through localized planning, cultural sensitivity, and industry-aligned training. Based on secondary data analysis and institutional observations, the paper proposes practical measures to strengthen the integration of skill development with formal education, career readiness, and women's empowerment.

Keywords: Rural development, skill enhancement, employability, women empowerment, vocational training, policy assessment, Mata Sundri Girls College

1. Introduction

In a rapidly evolving job market shaped by technological innovation, skill-based education has become a cornerstone of economic and social advancement. For rural college girls in Punjab, especially in semi-urban settings such as Mata Sundri Girls College, Dhade, employability is closely tied to access to relevant and high-quality vocational training. Despite the expansion of national skill development schemes, gaps persist due to factors such as limited awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and the mismatch between training content and local employment opportunities. Addressing these challenges is essential to enabling rural young women to participate more effectively in the workforce and achieve economic independence.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the performance and outreach of current skill development schemes aimed at rural youth
- To analyze policy provisions with specific attention to gender and regional disparities
- To explore institutional challenges in implementing skill-based programs in rural contexts
- To suggest strategies for bridging the gap between skills acquired and employability outcomes

3. Methodology

This is a policy review based entirely on secondary research. Sources include official government guidelines, reports from the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), documents relating to the National Education Policy 2020, and internal records from Mata Sundri Girls College's skill development initiatives. No primary surveys or direct student interviews were conducted for this study.

4. Overview of Major Government Skill Development Schemes

4.1 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

A flagship program aimed at providing short-term, NSQF-aligned training with a focus on job-oriented skills.

4.2 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)

Designed to enhance the employability of rural youth, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, aged between 15 and 35 years.

4.3 Udaan

A scheme with a special emphasis on improving employability among youth—particularly women—in Jammu & Kashmir and other selected regions.

4.4 National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)

Encourages practical, work-based learning through paid apprenticeships, enabling participants to gain industry experience alongside skill training.

5. Institutional Perspective: Initiatives at Mata Sundri Girls College

Mata Sundri Girls College has integrated skill development into its academic ecosystem by offering vocational training under PMKVY in the areas of Computer Animation and Fashion Technology (Embroidery).

- Computer Animation: Two batches of 60 students each
- Fashion Technology (Embroidery): Two batches of 60 students each

All training was conducted in collaboration with accredited partners, and participants received government-recognized certificates upon completion. These programs have notably improved students' digital literacy, vocational readiness, and confidence.

Additional institutional measures include:

- Registration drives for SWAYAM and eSkill India platforms
- Awareness programs on women's entrepreneurship
- Career counseling sessions focused on government opportunities

6. Challenges Encountered by Rural Female Students

- Cultural and Social Constraints: Limited mobility and career choice due to gender norms
- Awareness Barriers: Insufficient knowledge of available skill development options
- Infrastructure Limitations: Poor internet connectivity and lack of nearby training centers
- Employment Mismatch: Skills acquired may not align with regional job market demands

7. Policy Review and Identified Gaps

While the national schemes have commendable objectives, their implementation often falls short in addressing:

- The career aspirations of rural college-going women seeking long-term career growth
- Cultural conditions that limit women's participation in employment far from home
- The digital divide that prevents access to online learning tools and resources

8. Recommendations

- Establish Rural Skill Development Cells in every girls' college, supported by District Skill Committees
- Promote blended learning models combining online and offline modes, tailored for rural women
- Foster alumni mentorship programs to inspire and guide students
- Strengthen college–industry partnerships for internships and placements
- Develop local economic skill maps to ensure training matches market demands

9. Conclusion

Skill development is more than a policy directive—it is a pathway to empowerment and sustainable livelihoods for rural women. At Mata Sundri Girls College, Dhade, active integration of skill programs has already begun to make an impact. With more localized, culturally sensitive, and industry-driven approaches, skill training can serve as a powerful tool for transforming the economic prospects of young women in Punjab's rural areas.

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