

# Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

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## Abstract

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is a flagship skill development scheme initiated by the Government of India to leverage its demographic dividend. This research paper provides a comprehensive analysis of PMKVY, tracing its evolution from a pilot program in 2015 to its present form as PMKVY 4.0. The study examines the scheme's core components, including Short-Term Training (STT), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and Special Projects, while also scrutinizing its multifaceted approach to fostering entrepreneurship and livelihood creation.

The analysis reveals a critical paradox in the scheme's outcomes: while PMKVY has successfully trained over 1.6 crore candidates and has been endorsed by a high percentage of surveyed employers, its overall job placement rates have been low and are subject to significant data discrepancies. The report synthesizes findings from official government reports, third-party evaluations, academic studies, and media analyses to identify persistent challenges, notably a fundamental mismatch between training curricula and labor market needs, issues related to training quality and infrastructure, and administrative and monitoring shortfalls.

Furthermore, the paper explores the strategic linkages between PMKVY and financial assistance programs like the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), suggesting a deliberate policy shift toward a multi-faceted support system for beneficiaries. The introduction of digital platforms like the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) under PMKVY 4.0 is identified as a transformative measure aimed at enhancing accountability, transparency, and market responsiveness. The report

concludes with strategic recommendations for future policy refinement, emphasizing the need to prioritize quality over quantity, strengthen industry collaborations, and leverage technology to ensure sustainable and impactful outcomes in India's skill development ecosystem.

## Keywords

PMKVY, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, India, Vocational Training, NSDC, Youth Employment, RPL, PMMY, SIDH

## 1. Introduction: The Imperative for Skill Development in a Demographic Dividend

### 1.1. Context and Rationale

India possesses one of the world's most significant demographic advantages, with over 65% of its population under the age of 35.<sup>1</sup> This unique demographic profile presents a substantial opportunity to drive economic growth and social progress. However, to capitalize on this potential, the nation must address a critical dual challenge: a high rate of unemployment among its youth and a widespread mismatch between the skills of the available workforce and the demands of modern industry.<sup>1</sup> Despite a large and educated workforce, industries often find graduates to be highly unemployable due to a lack of relevant, job-specific skills.<sup>3</sup> This disparity underscores the urgent need for a robust and scalable framework for vocational training and skill enhancement.

In response to this national imperative, the Government of India launched a revised National Skill Development Policy (NSDP) in 2015, setting an ambitious target to train and up-skill 400 million people by 2022.<sup>3</sup> The policy's goal was to meet the challenges of skilling at an unprecedented scale, with speed, and to exacting quality standards.

### 1.2. The Birth of PMKVY

As the flagship initiative of this new policy, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) was launched on July 15, 2015, on the occasion of World Youth Skills Day.<sup>2</sup> Implemented by the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), PMKVY was designed as an outcome-based skill training and certification scheme.<sup>3</sup> Its core objective was to "enable and mobilize a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood".<sup>3</sup> The scheme sought to achieve this by providing free training and incentivizing youth for skill certification, thereby boosting employability and productivity across various sectors of the economy.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.3. Scope of the Research

This paper presents a detailed, evidence-based analysis of PMKVY's performance. It goes beyond a simple description of the scheme's components to critically assess its effectiveness in achieving its stated objectives of both skill development and entrepreneurship promotion. The research identifies key successes as well as persistent challenges, including discrepancies in reported outcomes, issues of training quality, and administrative and implementation gaps. By

synthesizing a diverse body of official reports, academic studies, and media investigations, the paper provides a comprehensive evaluation and offers strategic recommendations for strengthening the skill development ecosystem in India.

## **2. The Evolution of PMKVY: A Phased Approach to Skilling**

PMKVY has evolved through multiple phases, each marked by a distinct strategic focus and an attempt to address the challenges of its predecessors.

### **2.1. PMKVY 1.0 (2015-16): The Pilot Phase**

The scheme's pilot phase was launched with an initial target to train and certify 5 million youth by 2020.<sup>2</sup> With a budget of ₹15 billion, it aimed to provide monetary rewards and quality training based on National Occupational Standards (NOS).<sup>5</sup> This initial phase successfully trained and certified 19.85 lakh candidates, surpassing its pilot target of 1.8 million.<sup>5</sup> However, the program's placement rate during this period stood at a modest 18.4% of certified candidates.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.2. PMKVY 2.0 (2016-20): Scaling Up and Alignment**

Following the pilot's success, the scheme was relaunched with a total budgetary outlay of ₹12,000 crore, aiming to train 10 million youth over four years.<sup>5</sup> PMKVY 2.0 was designed with greater alignment to other national missions, such as 'Make in India' and 'Digital India'.<sup>10</sup> The scheme's implementation was bifurcated into two components: the Centrally Sponsored Centrally Managed (CSCM) component, implemented by NSDC with 75% of the funds, and the Centrally Sponsored State Managed (CSSM) component, implemented by State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs) with 25% of the funds.<sup>10</sup> Under this phase, 89.59 lakh candidates were trained<sup>12</sup>, and the reported placement rate for certified candidates marginally increased to 23.4%.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.3. PMKVY 3.0 (2020-22): Addressing the Pandemic and Enhancing State Role**

Launched with a pilot outlay of ₹949 crore, PMKVY 3.0 was introduced to address the challenges and lessons learned from the first two phases, as well as the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>12</sup> This phase placed an increased emphasis on the role of District Skill Committees (DSCs) to better assess and address local skill gaps.<sup>15</sup> Despite these efforts, the number of trained candidates fell to 2.78 lakh<sup>12</sup>, and the placement rate plummeted to its lowest point, at a reported 5.8% to 10.1%.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.4. PMKVY 4.0 (2022-26): A New Era of Demand-Driven, Digital Skilling**

The current phase, PMKVY 4.0, is being implemented as part of the restructured 'Skill India Programme,' which has a composite outlay of ₹8,800 crore until 2026.<sup>17</sup> This iteration represents a significant strategic shift, focusing on a "demand-driven" approach, with a greater emphasis on on-the-job training, internships, and apprenticeships to provide hands-on, practical experience.<sup>19</sup> Notably, new courses have been introduced in emerging technologies and "future skills" such as AI, robotics, 5G, cybersecurity, and drone technology, reflecting a commitment to aligning training with the evolving

needs of Industry 4.0.<sup>17</sup>

The progressive decline in placement rates from PMKVY 1.0 to 3.0 points to a systemic failure of the initial model, where the scheme prioritized meeting ambitious quantitative targets over achieving sustainable employment outcomes. The government's decision in PMKVY 4.0 to officially "delink" placement tracking from the scheme's core policy document is a direct acknowledgment of these past challenges.<sup>21</sup> This pivot in strategy shifts the focus from a single, rigid metric (job placement) to a broader, more flexible set of outcomes, including self-employment, entrepreneurship, and up-skilling for diversified career paths.<sup>21</sup> This change signals a movement away from a purely supply-driven model to a more flexible, outcome-based framework that better accounts for the multifaceted nature of livelihood creation in India.

### **3. PMKVY's Framework for Skill Development**

The PMKVY scheme is structured around three primary components designed to cater to different segments of the Indian workforce.

#### **3.1. Short-Term Training (STT): Bridging the Dropout Gap**

Short-Term Training is the most prominent component of PMKVY, targeting school and college dropouts or unemployed youth aged 15 to 45 years.<sup>3</sup> Training is provided at affiliated PMKVY Training Centres (TCs) and is based on the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).<sup>3</sup> The curriculum is holistic, combining theoretical and practical sessions with mandatory modules on soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and digital literacy.<sup>2</sup> The duration of these courses typically ranges from 150 to 600 hours, depending on the job role.<sup>9</sup> All training and assessment fees are fully paid by the government, removing financial barriers for eligible candidates.<sup>3</sup>

#### **3.2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): Formalizing the Informal Workforce**

The Recognition of Prior Learning component is designed to assess and certify the skills of individuals who have gained experience through informal learning or on-the-job experience.<sup>3</sup> The program aims to align the competencies of India's unregulated workforce with the standardized NSQF.<sup>3</sup> By providing formal certification, RPL enhances the credibility and employability of existing workers in sectors such as construction, agriculture, and handicrafts.<sup>9</sup> The average monthly income of RPL-certified individuals was found to be 19% higher than that of their non-certified peers<sup>23</sup>, demonstrating that formal recognition alone can significantly increase market mobility and economic value. However, the quality of these courses has been questioned, as some can be as short as 24 to 80 hours.<sup>10</sup>

#### **3.3. Special Projects and On-the-Job Training**

The Special Projects component of PMKVY enables customized training programs for specific groups, locations, or industries that may not fit the standard STT framework.<sup>2</sup> This includes training in premises of government bodies, corporations, or for special job roles not covered by existing Qualification Packs (QPs).<sup>3</sup> PMKVY 4.0 places a new emphasis on on-the-job training (OJT) and apprenticeships to ensure candidates gain practical, real-world skills.<sup>18</sup> The existence of both STT and RPL programs reveals a sophisticated, two-tiered strategy. STT is a foundational program for

new entrants to the workforce, while RPL is designed to formalize and upgrade the skills of the pre-existing, informal workforce. This dual approach indicates that the scheme's mission is not solely about creating new skills but also about legitimizing and enhancing existing ones, which is crucial for a nation with a vast informal economy.

#### 4. Analysis of Entrepreneurship Support and Livelihood Creation

PMKVY's mandate extends beyond traditional job placement to actively promote self-employment and entrepreneurship.

##### 4.1. Promoting Self-Employment within the Curriculum

A key feature of the PMKVY curriculum is the inclusion of mandatory modules on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and digital literacy.<sup>2</sup> This is a strategic move to equip beneficiaries with the foundational knowledge required to start and manage their own ventures.<sup>11</sup> The scheme's overarching objective is to help youth "earn their livelihood" and encourage them to become financially independent, which includes starting their own businesses or ventures.<sup>7</sup>

##### 4.2. Linkages with Financial Schemes

To provide a viable pathway for self-employment, PMKVY is strategically linked with other government financial assistance programs.<sup>25</sup> The most prominent of these is the

**Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**, which offers collateral-free micro-credit to income-generating micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector.<sup>31</sup> PMMY loans are categorized into three tiers, signifying the stage of growth and funding needs of the beneficiary's business:

- **Shishu:** Loans up to ₹50,000, intended for new entrepreneurs.<sup>31</sup>
- **Kishore:** Loans between ₹50,001 and ₹5 lakh, for businesses that are already established.<sup>31</sup>
- **Tarun:** Loans between ₹5 lakh and ₹10 lakh, for businesses in a growth phase.<sup>31</sup>

The Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) serves as a digital nexus that integrates skilling, employment, and entrepreneurship ecosystems.<sup>23</sup> This platform allows trained candidates to access not only job and apprenticeship opportunities but also resources and support for self-employment.<sup>23</sup>

The relationship between PMKVY and PMMY illustrates a sophisticated, multi-faceted policy approach. Rather than operating as a single, linear training-to-job scheme, the government has created a synergistic ecosystem. PMKVY provides the essential human capital through skill development, while PMMY provides the crucial financial capital needed for business creation.<sup>11</sup> This integrated model acknowledges that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient to address the diverse economic aspirations of a vast and varied population, allowing for both traditional employment and self-employment as valid and supported outcomes.

#### 5. Critical Impact Assessment: The Paradox of Outcomes

Despite PMKVY's ambitious targets and large-scale implementation, a critical assessment of its impact reveals a significant paradox in its outcomes.

### 5.1. Placement Rates: The Central Discrepancy

A central point of contention in the evaluation of PMKVY is the inconsistency in its reported placement rates. While the official PMKVY website has claimed a 54% placement rate, analyses of government data reveal a much lower figure. For instance, out of over 1.6 crore candidates trained since 2015, only 24.3 lakh (less than 15%) have secured jobs.<sup>24</sup> The discrepancy becomes even more pronounced when examining specific phases:

- PMKVY 1.0 (2015-16) placement rate: 18.4%.<sup>13</sup>
- PMKVY 2.0 (2016-20) placement rate: 23.4%.<sup>13</sup>
- PMKVY 3.0 (2020-22) placement rate: a sharp decline to 10.1% or even 5.8%.<sup>13</sup>

This disparity highlights a fundamental issue in the program's original design, which may have prioritized the "numbers game"—training a large volume of candidates to meet ambitious targets—over ensuring high-quality, sustainable employment outcomes. The sharp decline in placement rates during PMKVY 3.0 suggests that the program was highly susceptible to external shocks like the pandemic, which exacerbated underlying weaknesses in its placement mechanisms. The strategic decision under PMKVY 4.0 to "delink" placement tracking from the scheme and instead focus on a broader range of career paths, including self-employment, can be interpreted as a tacit acknowledgment that the previous model was not fully effective.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 1: Key Statistics and Targets Across PMKVY Phases (1.0 to 4.0)**

Phase	Time Period	Target (Youth)	Candidates Trained	Candidates Certified	Placement Rate*
PMKVY 1.0	2015-16	2.4 million	1.98 million	1.98 million	18.4%
PMKVY 2.0	2016-20	10 million	8.96 million	8.96 million	23.4%
PMKVY 3.0	2020-22	8 lakh	4.45 lakh	2.78 lakh	10.1%
PMKVY 4.0	2022-26	1.5 crore	N/A	N/A	N/A (Delinked)
*Data reflects reported placement rates for certified candidates under the Short-Term Training (STT) component and may vary based on reporting source and methodology. <sup>13</sup>					

### 5.2. Income and Employment Enhancement

Despite the low overall placement rates, evaluations of the scheme present a more positive picture regarding its qualitative impact. A third-party evaluation of PMKVY 2.0 found that the mean monthly income of individuals trained and certified under the Short-Term Training (STT) component was 15% higher than that of a comparison group of non-participants.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the average monthly income of RPL-certified individuals was 19% higher than that of their non-certified peers.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, a 2020 NITI Aayog study on the jobs and skills sector noted that a significant 94% of surveyed employers expressed an intention to hire more candidates trained under PMKVY, reflecting strong industry acceptance of the certification.<sup>20</sup>

### 5.3. Case Studies of Success

The scheme's potential is also evidenced by inspiring individual success stories. Narratives from training partners showcase personal transformations, such as Yuvaraj S, who overcame multiple rejections to become a software engineer, and Rajan, a farmer's son who leveraged his training in e-commerce to become an online entrepreneur.<sup>34</sup> These case studies demonstrate that when the training is of high quality and aligns with a candidate's aptitude, PMKVY can be genuinely transformative. However, the existence of these individual successes alongside the low aggregate placement rates highlights a critical distinction: while the program can deliver successful outcomes, it has struggled to scale these results systemically. The challenge for PMKVY is to move from a model of isolated success stories to one of consistent, widespread success.

## 6. Persistent Challenges and Implementation Gaps

A comprehensive analysis of PMKVY reveals several persistent challenges that have hindered its full potential.

### 6.1. The Mismatch Between Training and Market Needs

A core criticism of the scheme is a fundamental disconnect between the skills taught in training centers and the actual requirements of the labor market.<sup>1</sup> This mismatch results in "half-trained workers" who possess certificates but lack the practical, job-ready skills needed to perform tasks effectively.<sup>14</sup> This supply-driven approach, where the scheme trained large numbers of people with the hope that the market would absorb them, largely failed to meet expectations, as reflected in the low placement rates. The shift toward a demand-driven model in PMKVY 4.0, which includes district-level skill gap studies and on-the-job training, is a direct attempt to correct this systemic flaw.<sup>19</sup>

### 6.2. Quality of Training and Infrastructure Deficiencies

The quality of training has been a recurrent issue. The proliferation of short-term courses, with some lasting as little as 24 hours, raises serious questions about the depth of skills imparted.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the program's reliance on a large number of training partners, many of whom were onboarded without "stringent due diligence," led to significant failures in delivery.<sup>35</sup> The widespread use of a revenue-sharing franchise model created perverse incentives, where the focus shifted from quality training and placements to maximizing enrollment numbers, leading to issues like "ghost beneficiaries".<sup>35</sup> Physical infrastructure also presented challenges, with a number of approved training centers being surrendered or not established due to operational and financial difficulties.<sup>16</sup>

### 6.3. Administrative and Monitoring Shortfalls

The scheme has faced significant administrative challenges. A lack of grassroots-level sensitization meant that awareness of the program did not adequately reach the most needy beneficiaries in remote villages and slums.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, with a vast network of training partners and centers, monitoring and quality assurance became a major challenge for the limited staff of the monitoring unit.<sup>36</sup> This resulted in issues with data transparency, fund flow, and quality control. Furthermore, a Lok Sabha standing committee noted persistent shortfalls in enrollment and underutilization of funds, which were attributed to delayed cabinet approvals and staggered fund releases, hindering the scheme's full-fledged rollout.<sup>16</sup>

Table 2: Identified Challenges and their Reported Causes

Challenge	Reported Cause(s)
Low Placement Rate	Mismatch between training curricula and market demands; proliferation of short-term, low-quality courses; poor monitoring of training partners.
Declining Enrollment	Delayed cabinet approvals and staggered fund releases; slow implementation and achievement of targets.
Inconsistent Data & Fraud	Proliferation of training partners without due diligence; reliance on franchise models; lack of robust, real-time monitoring mechanisms.
Inadequate Infrastructure	Operational difficulties and financial stress for training centers; non-allocation of targets; issues with infrastructure constraints.
Lack of Awareness	Failure to sensitize the program at the grassroots level; limited mass campaigns and outreach to beneficiaries.

## 7. Discussion: Synthesizing Findings and Future Directions

The trajectory of the PMKVY scheme reflects a continuous process of policy refinement from a quantitative, target-driven model to a more qualitative, outcome-focused one. The delinking of placement from the scheme in PMKVY 4.0 is not an abandonment of employment goals but rather a strategic reorientation toward a more flexible and holistic definition of livelihood, which includes self-employment and re-skilling. This shift acknowledges the past failures of a rigid, linear model and embraces a more realistic and multi-pronged approach that can better adapt to a rapidly changing economic landscape.

A major reform aimed at rectifying the persistent administrative and monitoring shortfalls is the introduction of the **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)**.<sup>23</sup> This platform is designed to serve as a one-stop digital solution that integrates all aspects of the skilling ecosystem—from education and training to employment and entrepreneurship.<sup>23</sup> SIDH ensures transparency and accountability through Aadhaar-based authentication, mandatory Aadhaar-enabled biometric attendance (AEBAS), and digital tracking of the candidate lifecycle.<sup>33</sup> This represents a fundamental shift from a manual, human-based monitoring system to a technology-driven, real-time, and transparent system. By leveraging technology, the scheme can more effectively address issues of fraudulent enrollments and low-quality delivery that plagued its earlier phases.

The strategic pivot of PMKVY 4.0 towards a "demand-driven" approach, with its focus on emerging technologies like AI, robotics, and drone technology, is an encouraging sign of a policy that is learning and adapting.<sup>19</sup> This new model seeks to align training curricula directly with market demands, a critical step toward bridging the skill mismatch that has been a major impediment to the scheme's success.<sup>27</sup>

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 8.1. Concluding Remarks

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana has been a monumental effort to address India's skill deficit and harness its demographic dividend. Its impact is undeniable, having provided training and certification to over a crore youth. However, its journey has been characterized by a significant paradox: high-volume training with low and inconsistent placement rates. While the program has demonstrated its potential through successful individual case studies and strong employer satisfaction with certified candidates, it has struggled to scale these positive outcomes systemically. The evolution of the scheme into PMKVY 4.0, with its emphasis on a demand-driven, digitally-enabled, and flexible approach, is a clear indication that the government has recognized these challenges and is actively working to correct them. The success of this new phase will hinge on its ability to effectively implement these reforms and move beyond a focus on quantity to a dedicated pursuit of quality and sustainable outcomes.

### 8.2. Strategic Recommendations

Based on the evidence presented, the following strategic recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of PMKVY and India's broader skill development ecosystem:

- **Strengthen Industry-Curriculum Linkages:** The government must mandate and incentivize continuous, formal collaboration between Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) and industries to ensure that training curricula are not only aligned with the NSQF but also with the real-time, dynamic needs of the labor market.<sup>1</sup>
- **Enhance Post-Training Support:** While PMKVY 4.0 has delinked placements, it should establish a more robust and dedicated mechanism for linking beneficiaries with financial schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana.<sup>25</sup> This support should include dedicated counseling and application assistance for trainees interested in self-employment.
- **Incentivize Quality over Quantity:** The payment model for training partners should be revised to link a higher percentage of payouts to verifiable, long-term employment or self-employment outcomes, not just certification.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, a transparent system for blacklisting and debarring underperforming training agencies should be rigorously enforced.<sup>21</sup>
- **Expand Experiential Learning:** Increase the allocation and incentives for on-the-job training, internships, and apprenticeships. This will ensure that trainees acquire practical, hands-on skills that are directly relevant to their chosen field, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.<sup>18</sup>
- **Intensify Grassroots Awareness:** Launch targeted, large-scale awareness campaigns in regional languages, leveraging community leaders, local government bodies, and mobile technology to ensure that information about the scheme and its benefits reaches all intended beneficiaries, especially in rural and underserved areas.<sup>36</sup>

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