

Educational Interventions and Empowerment of Artisans in Terracotta Craft of Panchmura, Bankura: A Mixed-Methods Study under the Skill India Mission

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Abstract

The terracotta craft of Panchmura, Bankura, is a vital indigenous tradition of West Bengal, renowned for its cultural symbolism and heritage value. Despite its historic significance, this sector has faced decline due to industrialization, low market access, and lack of formal educational integration. This study investigates the role of education and training in empowering terracotta artisans within the framework of the Skill India Mission. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 35 artisans through structured interviews, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, and in-depth case studies. Quantitative results revealed that 68% of artisans had only primary education, while 54% reported a 15–20% rise in income after participating in training programs such as PMKVY and RPL. Qualitative findings indicated that educational exposure enhanced artisans' confidence, market awareness, and cultural identity. However, constraints including low digital literacy, limited craft-specific curricula, and insufficient infrastructural support persisted. The study concludes that integrating education with community-based, craft-oriented training and policy reforms can significantly strengthen artisans' empowerment and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

Keywords: Terracotta craft, Panchmura, education, empowerment, Skill India Mission, vocational training, artisans.

1. Introduction

Panchmura, located in Bankura district, West Bengal, is globally recognized for its terracotta art, particularly the “Bankura horse,” a symbol of Bengal’s cultural identity (Ghosh, 2020) ^[1]. The craft has traditionally relied on hereditary skill transfer, but socio-economic transitions and industrial competition have marginalized artisan communities (Sen, 2019) ^[2].

The Skill India Mission (2015) was envisioned to bridge the gap between traditional skills and modern employability by providing structured training and certification opportunities (MSDE, 2023) ^[3]. However, the degree to which this mission has succeeded in fostering education-driven empowerment among Panchmura’s artisans remains insufficiently explored.

2. Objectives

1. To assess the educational profile of Panchmura terracotta artisans.

2. To examine the role of formal and vocational education in artisans' empowerment.
3. To analyze the impact of Skill India training programs (PMKVY, RPL) on artisans' livelihoods.
4. To propose education-driven strategies for sustainable empowerment.

3. Methodology

- **Research Design:** Mixed-methods (descriptive survey + qualitative case studies).
- **Study Area:** Panchmura village, Bankura district, West Bengal.
- **Sample:** 35 artisans selected via purposive sampling.
- **Data Tools:**
 - Structured interviews (educational background, empowerment outcomes).
 - Five-point Likert scale questionnaire (25 items).
 - 5 case studies of artisans.

- **Analysis:**

- **Quantitative:** Percentage and tabular representation.
- **Qualitative:** Thematic analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) ^[4].

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Educational Profile of Artisans

Education Level	Percentage (%)	No. of Artisans
No Formal Education	12%	4
Primary Education	68%	24
Secondary Education	20%	7

Most artisans lacked formal education beyond primary school, which limited their capacity to adapt to new technologies or financial literacy requirements (Kothari, 2004) ^[5].

4.2 Impact of Training Programs

Training Program	Participation (%)	Key Benefits
PMKVY	60%	Improved design knowledge, certification
RPL	40%	Skill recognition, enhanced credibility
NGO-led Workshops	30%	Market linkage and entrepreneurial training

Artisans who participated in training programs reported an average 15-20% increase in income, highlighting the economic value of educational interventions (NSDC, 2022) ^[6].

4.3 Empowerment Outcomes

Empowerment Dimension	Observed Outcome (%)
Economic Empowerment	54%
Social Empowerment	47%
Cultural Empowerment	65%
Digital Awareness	25%

Training improved artisans' confidence and cultural identity, but digital literacy lagged significantly (World Bank, 2022) ^[7].

4.4 Case Study Insights

One of the case studies involved a 45-year-old terracotta artisan from Panchmura who had been engaged in this traditional craft for over two decades. He reported that after receiving formal training under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), his monthly income increased from approximately Rs.8,000 to Rs.12,000, indicating a 50% rise in earnings. In addition to this, he was introduced to digital literacy modules during the training sessions, which enabled him to collaborate with local NGOs and utilize online platforms for product promotion and sales. As a result, he successfully expanded his market reach to urban buyers and craft fairs outside West Bengal.

However, despite these positive outcomes, the artisan highlighted several persistent challenges. He emphasized the urgent need for continuous mentorship programs, as the short-term nature of government training often failed to provide ongoing guidance in business management and market adaptation. He also identified limited access to quality raw

materials and the fluctuating costs of clay and fuel as major barriers to profitability. Furthermore, he expressed that while training helped improve basic skills, innovation in terracotta design and exposure to modern market trends remained inadequate. These findings underline the necessity of integrating long-term capacity-building support with existing government schemes to ensure sustainable growth for artisans.

5. Discussion

The study findings clearly demonstrate that education and skill development exert a transformative impact on the socio-economic empowerment of Panchmura terracotta artisans. Participation in structured programs such as PMKVY has improved income levels, enhanced digital literacy, and facilitated access to new markets. These outcomes support existing research highlighting the link between education, empowerment, and cultural sustainability among traditional artisan communities (UNESCO, 2020) ^[8].

Nonetheless, the Skill India Mission's general training framework often falls short in addressing the specific needs of craft-based occupations. Terracotta artisans, for instance, require specialized modules in design innovation, eco-friendly production techniques, and branding strategies tailored to craft-based entrepreneurship. The lack of these targeted components limits the long-term effectiveness of current training schemes and creates a disconnect between policy initiatives and the lived realities of artisans.

Moreover, the discussion suggests that mentorship, access to affordable raw materials, and integration of formal education with craft learning should be treated as critical components of future policy. Without these, artisans remain dependent on traditional markets with limited income mobility and minimal global competitiveness.

Conclusion

The case of Panchmura terracotta artisans illustrates the central role of education in driving empowerment and livelihood enhancement within traditional craft communities. While government interventions like PMKVY and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme have provided a foundation for skill acquisition, the current training ecosystem remains insufficient for addressing the nuanced needs of artisans.

For Sustainable Development, there is a Pressing need to Reform Existing Training Programs by Incorporating

1. Craft-specific learning modules focused on design, production, and marketing.
2. Digital literacy and e-commerce training to connect artisans with wider markets.
3. Continuous mentorship and raw material support for reducing cost burdens and improving profitability.
4. Integration of formal and non-formal education to ensure intergenerational transfer of both traditional and modern skills.

In conclusion, an education-empowerment linkage that aligns traditional knowledge with contemporary policy frameworks is essential for revitalizing the terracotta craft of Panchmura. Such an approach would not only preserve cultural heritage but also secure sustainable livelihoods for rural artisan communities.

Recommendations

1. Develop craft-specific curricula under Skill India.
2. Launch community-based digital literacy workshops.
3. Strengthen market linkages via e-commerce partnerships.
4. Provide continuous mentorship and financial support for artisans.
5. Promote education-integrated craft learning within rural schools.

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