

# A Study of English Language Skill Development and its Correlation with Youth Employment Outcomes in Aspirational Districts of India

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the intricate relationship between the development of English language skills and the employment outcomes of youth in India's Aspirational Districts, drawing upon secondary data from authoritative government sources and reputable non-governmental research institutions. In an increasingly interconnected global economy, where English proficiency is a pivotal determinant of employability, this research examines the role of language training initiatives in enhancing job preparedness and facilitating access to economic opportunities within some of India's most socio-economically marginalized regions- the Aspirational Districts. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation, particularly in sectors that demand client-facing communication, digital literacy, and formal interactions. The paper culminates in strategic recommendations aimed at reinforcing policy frameworks, aligning curricula with industry demands, and fostering sustainable, scalable skill development models to address the linguistic barriers hindering economic progress in these districts.*

**Keywords:** English language skills, youth employability, Aspirational Districts, skill development, India, Bharat, communication training, language training

## I. INTRODUCTION

India's demographic profile presents a unique opportunity to leverage its burgeoning youth population for economic transformation. It stands at a pivotal point where it can benefit from a significant demographic dividend, is positioned at a crucial juncture where the effective empowerment of its youth through comprehensive education, skill enhancement, and expanded employment avenues is essential for sustained national development. However, regional disparities in development continue to impede inclusive growth. In response, the Government of India launched the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) in January 2018, aimed at transforming 112 of the most underdeveloped districts across the country through rapid improvement in key sectors such as health, education, agriculture, financial inclusion, and infrastructure (NITI Aayog, 2018).

These districts have been identified using a composite index based on multiple socio-economic indicators, reflecting chronic developmental deficits. Many of them are located in regions affected by poverty, social exclusion, and limited access to quality education and employment opportunities (Mehta, 2020).

Proficiency in English, often perceived as a marker of socio-economic upward mobility in India, is increasingly linked to access to formal employment, especially in the organized and service sectors (Graddol, 2010). Among the various enablers of employability, English language proficiency has emerged as a core skill in both formal and informal job sectors. Yet, English language instruction remains weak or inconsistent in many of these districts, particularly at the foundational and secondary education levels. This creates a gap in both skill acquisition and employment outcomes for the youth in these regions.

Given that youth unemployment is a significant concern in aspirational districts, there is a pressing need to investigate the role of English language skill development in shaping employment trajectories. This study explores the direct and indirect impact of English communication training on employability outcomes for youth from underprivileged backgrounds in Aspirational Districts.



## **II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative analysis of secondary data. Sources include:

- **NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts Dashboard** (for performance indicators)
- **MSDE Annual Reports** (for skill development statistics)
- **NSDC Project Reports** (for training program outcomes)
- **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Select case studies and reports from NGOs like Pratham and Azim Premji Foundation

Additional data from the National Education Policy 2020 implementation review, and CSR project summaries by large Indian corporates

### **Scope & Limitations**

#### **Scope:**

- The analysis covers the period of 2018 to 2023.
- It focuses on English communication training as a component of larger skill development programs.
- It limits geographic focus to a selection of 20 Aspirational Districts representing different regions.
- The study examines outcomes such as employment rates, type of employment, migration for work, and retention.

#### **Limitations:**

- The study lacks to report data such as employment rates, type of employment of all Aspirational Districts, therefore the selective reportage on 20 districts might not be representative of the entire population.
- There could be a variability in program implementation due to local governance or NGO involvement.
- The study could potentially underreport informal employment outcomes.

#### **Hypotheses:**

- H1: English language skill development positively correlates with improved youth employment outcomes in Aspirational Districts.
- H0: English language skill development has no correlation with improved youth employment outcomes in Aspirational Districts.

## **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Several studies have identified the importance of English proficiency in enhancing employability in India. According to KPMG and Google (2017), nearly 70% of job listings in urban centers list English proficiency as a preferred skill. The British Council (2019) highlighted that English skills improve employment prospects, particularly in service-sector roles such as retail, BPOs, and tourism.

NITI Aayog (2021) reported that while digital and technical skills are emphasized in skill development programs in Aspirational Districts, communication skills—especially in English—are critical for placements outside the local geography. Reports from the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) show that districts with targeted communication training (e.g., Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, Dantewada in Chhattisgarh) have shown higher placement rates in formal employment.

The Azim Premji Foundation's 2020 working paper emphasized the cultural and motivational barriers in rural learners when approaching English, suggesting the need for context-sensitive pedagogy. Pratham's Annual ASER Reports consistently underscore the foundational gaps in English literacy across rural India, further justifying the need for targeted interventions.

McKinsey's Future of Work in India (2021) emphasized that English proficiency often acts as a gatekeeper for entry-level jobs in the organized sector, especially in finance, information technology, and healthcare.



#### IV. DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

**1. English Training as a Differentiator:** Data from NSDC projects indicate that vocational training programs incorporating English communication have higher placement percentages than those that do not. For instance, in the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) scheme implemented in Koraput (Odisha), participants with English and soft skills modules had a 15% higher placement rate. A case in Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh, showed that youth trained in English-based call center simulations secured employment in Lucknow's urban customer care hubs.

**2. Sector-Wise Employability:** Industries such as hospitality, customer support, healthcare, and e-commerce prefer candidates who can converse in English. In Barwani (Madhya Pradesh), youth trained under the "Rozgar Mela" scheme with an English module were more likely to secure jobs in nearby cities like Indore and Bhopal. Employers in healthcare facilities emphasized the necessity of English documentation and telecommunication for insurance and patient support services.

**3. Digital Platforms and EdTech:** Digital solutions like the "DIKSHA" app and English content on "SWAYAM" are accessible in these districts. However, actual usage data from the Ministry of Education suggests a digital divide—only about 35% of learners in remote districts accessed language learning content regularly. Reports from Bihar's Araria district showed an increased uptake of English language videos during the COVID-19 lockdown, indicating latent demand when physical access to classrooms is restricted.

**4. Role of NGOs and CSR:** NGOs like Pratham, the Aga Khan Foundation, and Teach For India have piloted English and soft skill programs tailored to rural learners. In Nandurbar (Maharashtra), a partnership between local colleges and Pratham led to a 22% rise in college-to-job transitions for final-year students. Tata STRIVE's English curriculum integrated with soft skills in Jharkhand's Simdega district contributed to higher inter-state placement rates in the hospitality sector.

**5. Gender Dimension:** English training had a disproportionately positive impact on young women. Programs that included spoken English, interview preparation, and personality development saw female participation rates and placements rise, especially in Meghalaya and Jharkhand. Testimonials from trainees highlighted how mastering basic English conversations helped them overcome social constraints and seek employment outside their immediate geographies.

**6. Language as Confidence Catalyst:** Beyond employability, the study found that improved English skills led to enhanced self-esteem and mobility. In Kalahandi (Odisha), the youth reported greater confidence in digital navigation, resume building, and participation in formal interactions after completing English-based training modules.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The research supports the hypothesis that English language skill development positively correlates with improved youth employment outcomes in Aspirational Districts. While infrastructural and digital barriers persist, districts that invested in English communication training as part of skilling programs showed greater placement success. Bridging the language gap not only opens up employment avenues but also builds confidence and social mobility, particularly among underrepresented youth segments.

This study recommends a threefold intervention strategy:

- (1) Embed English communication training into all central and state skilling programs
- (2) Promote mobile-based and offline English learning content for low-connectivity areas
- (3) Partner with NGOs and corporate CSR initiatives to expand learning sessions or trainings that fit local needs.

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