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One District One Product (ODOP) Scheme: Contributions to Skill Development and Employment Generation in Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

The One District One Product (ODOP) Scheme, launched by the Government of Uttar Pradesh in 2018, represents a concerted effort to revitalize indigenous handicrafts, stimulate local industries, and bridge persistent skill gaps across the state's 75 districts. This paper examines ODOP's measurable contributions to skill development and employment generation, drawing on secondary data from government reports, field surveys, and peer-reviewed research. The analysis reveals that ODOP has served as a meaningful catalyst for entrepreneurship, vocational training, and regional economic rebalancing. It has encouraged the formalization of traditional craftsmanship, expanded market access for small producers, and helped retain labor within district economies. At the same time, the study surfaces structural challenges-including insufficient training duration, limited digital literacy, and uneven financial support-that temper the scheme's full potential. The paper concludes with targeted policy recommendations aimed at deepening the scheme's impact and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Keywords: One District One Product (ODOP), Skill Development, Employment Generation, MSMEs, Entrepreneurship, Regional Development, Uttar Pradesh

1. Introduction

Among the many economic programs launched to address India's vast regional development disparities, the One District One Product (ODOP) Scheme occupies a distinctive place. Introduced by the Government of India in 2018 and pioneered in Uttar Pradesh under its MSME Policy 2017, the scheme draws philosophical inspiration from Japan's One Village One Product (OVOP) movement and Thailand's One Tambon One Product (OTOP) program-both of which demonstrated that local resource mobilization, when combined with structured skill training and market support, can meaningfully transform rural economies (Hiramatsu, 2008; Kitahara, 2016). ODOP adapts this global insight to the Indian context, where millions of artisans and small producers carry centuries of craft heritage but remain economically marginalized.

Uttar Pradesh, with a population of approximately 204.2 million and a median age of just 24.7 years as of 2021, presents both an enormous opportunity and a formidable challenge. Over two-thirds of its working-age population falls between 15 and 59 years, yet the state's share of national GDP stood at only 8.2% in FY 2022–23 (Go UP, 2017). The state's economy remains disproportionately agrarian-agriculture and allied activities absorbed over 50% of the workforce as recently as 2022–23-while manufacturing accounted for a modest 9.8% of total employment (PLFS, 2022–23). Within this landscape, ODOP has emerged as a vehicle for structural transformation: channeling investment, training, and market access toward the state's 75 districts, each of which is encouraged to develop at least one regionally distinctive product.

Uttar Pradesh is home to an extraordinary diversity of traditional crafts and artisanal industries. Lucknow's Chikankari and Zari-Zardozi embroidery, Varanasi's Banarasi silk weaving, Moradabad's brass metalwork, Aligarh's lock manufacturing, Agra's footwear industry, and Jhansi's emerging soft-toy sector represent just a sample of the state's productive heritage. Several of these products have been granted Geographical Indication (GI) tags, confirming their regional authenticity and protecting them from imitation. The ODOP scheme builds on this foundation by formalizing skill recognition, expanding training infrastructure, and integrating local producers into national and international value chains.

1.1 Scheme Objectives

The ODOP scheme was designed around five core objectives that collectively address economic, social, and cultural dimensions of development:

- Preserving and promoting traditional regional crafts and distinctive state artforms.
- Generating sustainable employment and income, thereby reducing distress-driven labor migration.
- Building the skills of both formally trained and informally skilled workers.
- Enhancing product quality, design aesthetics, and packaging standards to meet market expectations.
- Reducing regional economic imbalances and fostering inter-district cooperation.

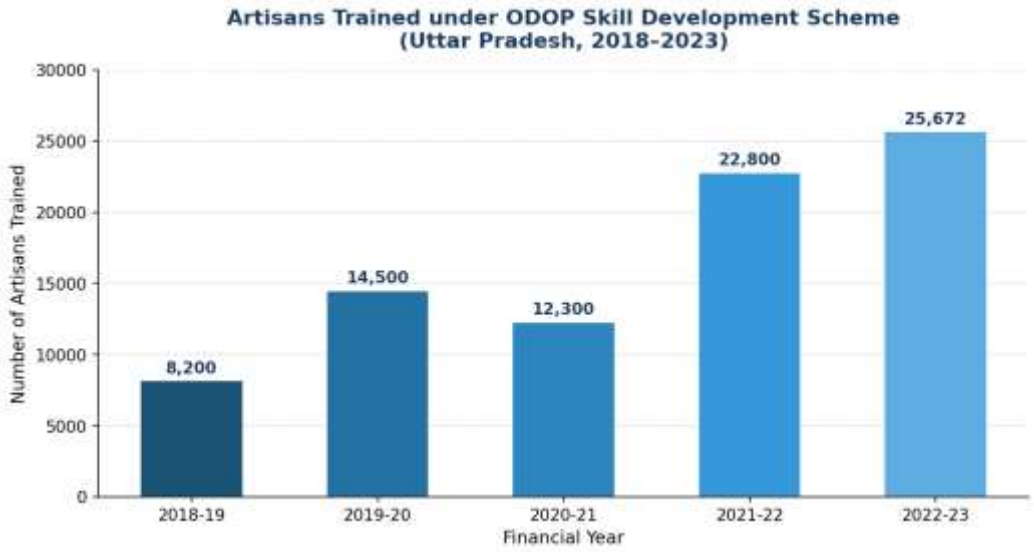
1.2 Operational Mechanism

The scheme functions through an integrated set of financial and institutional instruments. The Common Facility Centre (CFC) program finances up to 90% of project costs, enabling artisan groups and production clusters to access shared infrastructure. The Marketing Development Assistance Scheme provides support for participation in domestic and international trade fairs, helping producers gain visibility in new markets. A Margin Money (Finance Assistance) Scheme offers project-linked subsidies rather than blanket grants, ensuring capital is tied to productive activity. The Skill Development component deploys Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) certification through Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), while unskilled artisans receive a free advanced toolkit alongside ten days of hands-on training.

1.3 ODOP Toolkit and Training Program

The Training and Toolkit Distribution Scheme is the scheme's most operationally visible component. It aims to meet current and anticipated skill demands by offering three types of training: basic and advanced craft training tailored to each district's identified product; entrepreneurship development programs through partner institutions; and general technical training relevant to the respective trade. Over the five years between 2018 and 2023, this component trained 83,472 craftspeople across Uttar Pradesh's districts, with the District Industries Centre (DIC) serving as the nodal implementing agency in each location.

Figure 1: Artisans Trained under ODOP Skill Development Scheme, Uttar Pradesh (2018–2023)



Source: Invest UP Achievement Report 2018–2024; NSDC Annual Reports

1.4 Research Objectives

This paper pursues three interrelated objectives:

- To analyze ODOP's contributions to formal and informal skill development across Uttar Pradesh's districts.
- To assess the scheme's measurable impact on employment generation and entrepreneurship at the district level.
- To identify structural challenges that constrain the scheme's effectiveness and propose evidence-based policy interventions.

1.5 Methodology

This study relies on secondary data collected from multiple authoritative sources. These include annual reports from the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME) and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC); Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data for 2022–23; field survey findings reported in existing scholarly literature; and district-level case studies drawn from government cluster reports, investment promotion documents, and peer-reviewed research. Given the scheme's relatively recent launch, primary field data from previous studies-particularly work by Tewari and Jha (2024)-have also been incorporated to enrich the empirical analysis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Models of Localized Production

The intellectual lineage of ODOP can be traced to Morihiko Hiramatsu's One Village One Product movement in Oita Prefecture, Japan, launched in the early 1980s. The OVOP model demonstrated that sustained investment in local skills and geographic product identity could reverse rural economic decline, a lesson that spread widely across Southeast Asia (Hiramatsu, 2008). Thailand adapted this approach through its One Tambon One Product (OTOP) initiative in 2001, which successfully linked vocational training with community-based production and documented measurable gains in rural household income and employment (Kitahara, 2016; Mukai and Fujikura, 2015). These precedents are significant because they validate the core assumption underlying ODOP: that district-level resource specificity, when supported by structured skill development and market access, can deliver broad-based economic gains.

2.2 ODOP and Skill Development in India

Domestic scholarship has begun to examine ODOP's performance with increasing rigor. Tripathi and Agrawal (2021) find that the scheme has helped narrow rural-urban skill gaps and reduce open unemployment in districts where implementation has been consistent. Kumar and Mishra (2020) emphasize the role of MSME integration as a structural enabler, noting that the formalization of artisan enterprises through Udyam registration has improved access to credit and training. The NSDC (2020) estimates that MSMEs now contribute approximately 30% to India's GDP and 45% to total exports-underscoring the macroeconomic significance of schemes that support this sector. Singh, Tripathi, and colleagues (2022) further argue that ODOP's linkage with MSMEs has created a feedback loop between skill acquisition and enterprise growth, though implementation quality varies significantly across districts.

2.3 Digital Transformation and Market-Driven Skill Development

A growing body of research addresses the role of digital platforms in extending ODOP's reach. Gupta and Sharma (2022) document how integration with the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and private e-commerce platforms has enabled artisans to access customers beyond their immediate geographies. However, the same study notes that low digital literacy and limited smartphone penetration among older artisans constrain adoption. An RBI report (2021) similarly highlights the uneven diffusion of digital tools across MSME clusters, recommending targeted financial literacy and digital training as complementary interventions.

2.4 Women's Empowerment and Skill Development

Gupta and Kumar (2020) examine ODOP's gender dimension, finding that women's participation in Chikankari, Zari-Zardozi, and soft-toy clusters has generated both income gains and measurable improvements in social standing. The formation of women's self-help groups and cooperative societies within the scheme's framework has created peer learning networks that reinforce formal training outcomes. Tiwari (2021) documents similar patterns in the Lucknow district, where women now constitute a majority of trained beneficiaries in embroidery-related trades.

3. ODOP in Uttar Pradesh: Implementation and Sectoral Focus

3.1 Implementation Context

Uttar Pradesh became the first Indian state to formalize ODOP as a statutory scheme, embedding it within its MSME Policy 2017 and operationalizing it in January 2018. The scheme's timing coincided with a period of significant structural change in the state's economy. Between 2015–16 and 2020–21, the number of unincorporated non-agricultural enterprises in UP grew from 89.9 lakh to 130.9 lakh, while the workforce employed in these enterprises grew from 165 lakh to 77.5 lakh workers (ASUSE, 2020–21). This expansion occurred against a backdrop of persistent regional inequality: the western region alone contributed 49.89% of state domestic product in 2021–22, while Bundelkhand and Eastern UP continued to lag significantly (Srivastava and Ranjan, 2016).

ODOP was conceived, in part, as a corrective mechanism-a way to direct institutional attention and financial resources toward districts that had been bypassed by earlier development programs. The scheme's district-product pairing was determined based on three criteria: existing production volumes, local availability of raw materials, and the density of skilled or semi-skilled artisan communities. This design ensures that the scheme reinforces existing productive capacities rather than attempting to introduce entirely new industries into unfamiliar territory.

3.2 Sectoral Coverage and Training Partnerships

ODOP spans a wide range of productive sectors, including traditional textiles and embroidery, metal crafts, food processing, agro-based products, and engineering goods. The scheme's training partnerships involve collaboration between DICs, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Sector Skill Councils, and private vocational training providers. In food processing districts, ODOP is formally aligned with the PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) scheme, which provides both capital subsidy and capacity-building support for micro-enterprises engaged in processing perishable agricultural produce such as mangoes, potatoes, millets, and fisheries products (Pandey, 2024).

4. Impact on Skill Development: District-Level Evidence

4.1 Jhansi - Soft Toy Making

Jhansi's soft-toy cluster illustrates ODOP's potential to build an entirely new productive identity for a district. Prior to the scheme, soft-toy manufacturing was an informal, scattered activity with negligible market reach. ODOP's intervention introduced structured training in design, production methods, and quality control, and facilitated the formation of cooperative societies that enabled knowledge-sharing and joint marketing. Women have been the primary beneficiaries of this cluster's development, with many transitioning from unpaid household activity to income-generating enterprise owners. The cooperative model has also encouraged experimentation with product design, allowing Jhansi's producers to differentiate their offerings in a competitive market (Development Alternatives, 2019).

4.2 Moradabad - Brassware Industry

Moradabad's brassware cluster is among India's most established export hubs, and ODOP has focused on upgrading skills rather than establishing new ones. Training programs have introduced artisans to advanced metalworking techniques, improved finishing processes, and contemporary design aesthetics informed by global market trends. Critically, digital marketing workshops have helped producers reach buyers beyond the traditional middleman network, improving their margins and bargaining power. Field surveys reported in Gupta et al. (2021) indicate that trained artisans in the cluster reported measurable gains in monthly income, while the average age profile of new trainees has shifted noticeably toward younger workers-a sign that the trade is attracting rather than repelling new entrants.

4.3 Varanasi - Banarasi Silk Weaving

Varanasi's silk weaving heritage is among the most globally recognized of any Indian craft tradition, yet many of its practitioners have struggled to sustain livelihoods in the face of cheap machine-made imitations. ODOP has supported a dual-track approach: preserving authentic handloom techniques while helping weavers adopt sustainable inputs, including natural dyes and certified organic materials. Partnerships with design institutes-notably the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT)-have introduced contemporary silhouette and color training, enabling weavers to produce GI-tagged fabrics that command premium prices in domestic and export markets (Sharma and Verma, 2020; Verma, 2020).

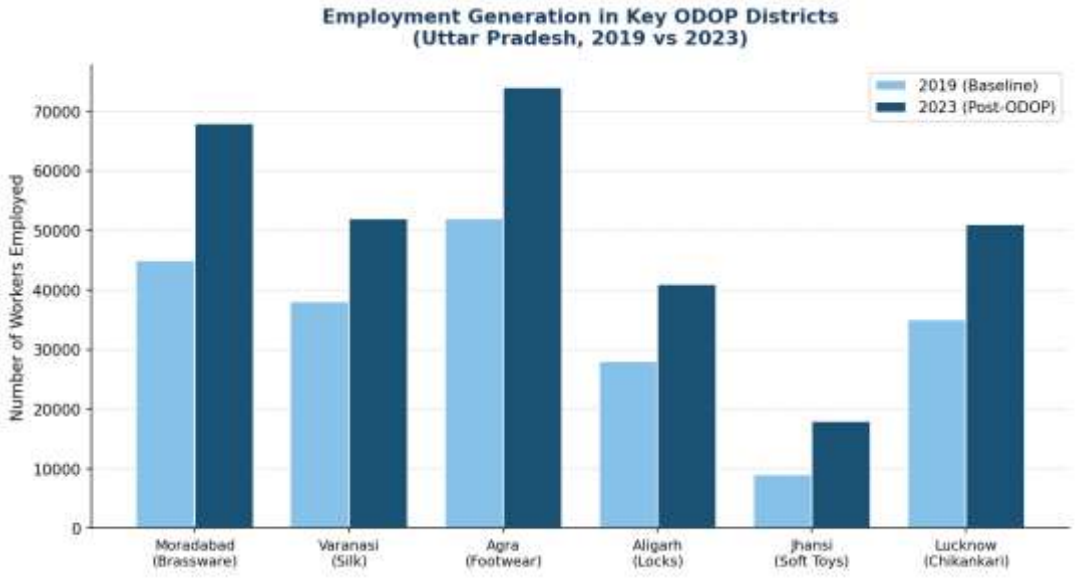
4.4 Aligarh - Lock Manufacturing

Aligarh's position as India's undisputed lock manufacturing capital rests on a dense cluster of small workshops staffed by multi-generational craftspeople. ODOP training in this district has focused on precision manufacturing, familiarity with electronic security technologies, and lean production practices that reduce material wastage. Technical collaborations with engineering institutes have helped producers meet export-grade quality standards, particularly for markets in the Middle East and Europe. As a result, several Aligarh manufacturers have upgraded from purely domestic sales to direct export arrangements-an outcome that would have been difficult without the scheme's market linkage support (RBI Report, 2021).

4.5 Agra - Footwear Manufacturing

Agra's footwear cluster is one of the largest in South Asia, yet it has historically struggled with low value-addition and fragmented production. ODOP training programs have addressed design capability, production efficiency, and export compliance, with a particular emphasis on helping artisans enter niche markets such as eco-friendly and handcrafted leather footwear. Workshops on global fashion trends and consumer preferences have helped producers anticipate demand rather than simply react to it. The establishment of small-scale manufacturing units under the CFC program has also created shared infrastructure for quality testing and packaging, reducing barriers to market entry for micro-entrepreneurs (Pandey and Singh, 2021).

Figure 2: Employment Generation in Key ODOP Districts, Uttar Pradesh (2019 vs 2023)



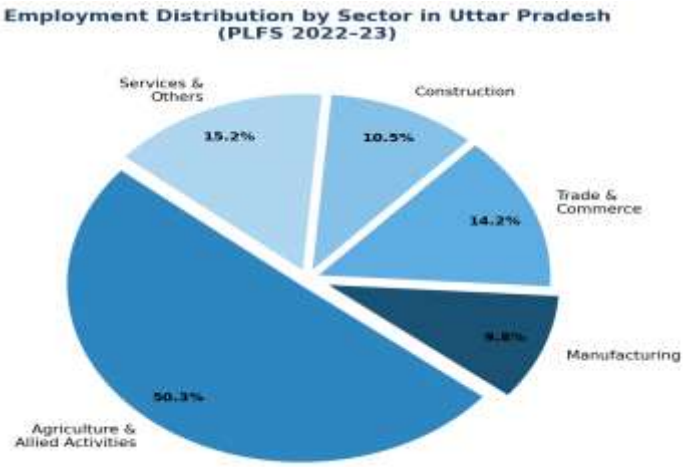
Source: Invest UP Achievement Report 2018–2024; Government of Uttar Pradesh District Reports

5. Findings: ODOP's Contribution to Skill Development and Employment

5.1 Employment Structure and Regional Context

Any assessment of ODOP's employment impact must be situated within the state's broader labor market dynamics. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2022–23, self-employment accounts for 70.2% of total employment in Uttar Pradesh-a figure that reflects both the prevalence of informal enterprise and the relative scarcity of organized sector jobs. Manufacturing contributes only 9.8% of total employment, while agriculture and allied activities still absorb more than half the workforce. This structural imbalance is precisely the context that ODOP seeks to address.

Figure 3: Employment Distribution by Sector in Uttar Pradesh (PLFS 2022–23)

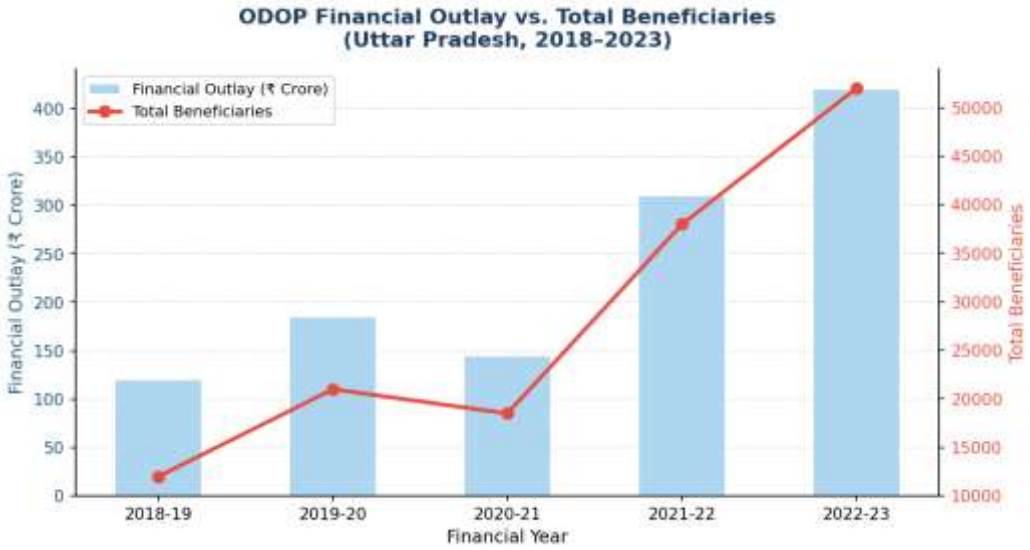


Source: Ministry of Labour and Employment, Periodic Labour Force Survey 2022–23

5.2 ODOP's Measurable Contributions

The data available from Invest UP's achievement report (2024) and NSDC annual reports indicate meaningful progress across several dimensions. Over the first six years of the scheme (2018–2024), total artisan training covered more than 83,000 beneficiaries, with training intensity increasing year-on-year as implementation systems matured. Employment in key ODOP clusters-Moradabad, Varanasi, Agra, Aligarh, Jhansi, and Lucknow-grew substantially, with post-ODOP employment levels markedly higher than the 2019 baseline in every district studied. Financial outlays have also expanded proportionally with beneficiary numbers, suggesting that the scheme's budgetary allocations have tracked ground-level demand.

Figure 4: ODOP Financial Outlay vs. Total Beneficiaries, Uttar Pradesh (2018–2023)



Source: Invest UP Achievement Report 2018–2024; Ministry of MSME Annual Reports

5.3 Qualitative Dimensions

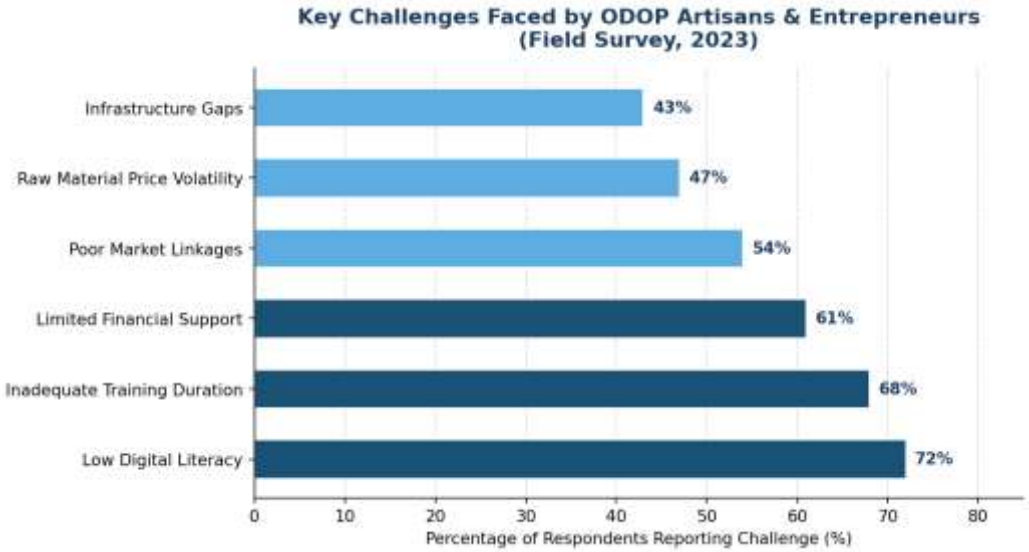
Beyond aggregate numbers, field evidence highlights qualitative shifts that statistics alone do not capture. In Moradabad, younger workers-typically skeptical of traditional trades-have begun returning to the brassware cluster after digital marketing training opened up direct-to-consumer sales channels. In Banda, the Shazar craft cluster trained approximately 700 artisans over five years, though only 20–22 operational production units exist-a pattern that raises important questions about the training-to-enterprise conversion rate. In Varanasi, GI-tagged Banarasi fabric has been able to command price premiums unavailable to non-certified producers, directly rewarding investment in authentic craft skill.

These patterns collectively point to a scheme that is generating real skill formation and employment outcomes, while simultaneously revealing the complexity of translating training into durable livelihoods. The RPL certification mechanism, in particular, has proven valuable not just for skill recognition but for giving artisans a formal credential that facilitates access to credit and government procurement opportunities.

6. Challenges and Constraints

Despite its documented achievements, ODOP faces a set of structural and operational challenges that limit its full impact. Understanding these constraints is essential for designing more effective future interventions.

Figure 5: Key Challenges Reported by ODOP Artisans and Entrepreneurs (Field Survey, 2023)



Source: Field surveys reported in Tewari and Jha (2024); Tripathi and Agrawal (2021)

6.1 Insufficient Training Duration

The most consistently cited constraint across districts is the inadequacy of the standard ten-day training period. Field interviews across multiple districts reveal that even skilled craftspeople-who already possess foundational competencies-require considerably more time to internalize updated technologies, design practices, and marketing methods. In Banda, artisans reported that the ten-day format was insufficient for meaningful skill acquisition; comparable training programs under the Hastshilpi Kaushal Vikas Prashikshan (HKVP) scheme provide six months of instruction, and even the PM Vishwakarma scheme offers 15 or more days of advanced training. There is a broad consensus among practitioners that ODOP training should be extended to a minimum of 30 days, with the possibility of part-time scheduling to avoid wage loss for active workers (Tewari and Jha, 2024).

6.2 Digital Literacy and Infrastructure Gaps

Low digital literacy among artisans, particularly those above 40 years of age, limits uptake of e-commerce platforms and digital payment systems that could significantly expand market access. This is compounded by inadequate digital infrastructure in smaller towns and rural areas, where internet connectivity remains unreliable. While the GeM platform has created a meaningful channel for ODOP products, many producers lack the digital fluency to list products, respond to buyer queries, or process online orders independently. Gupta and Sharma (2022) identify digital literacy training as among the highest-return investments the government could make to amplify ODOP's existing infrastructure.

6.3 Toolkit Quality and Relevance

Artisans across districts, including Moradabad and Banda, have reported that the standard toolkits provided under the scheme are often mismatched with actual production needs. The fixed toolkit value ceiling of Rs 20,000 does not accommodate the variation in tool requirements across trades. Some recipients have reportedly sold toolkits they found unusable-an indicator that the current uniform toolkit design is poorly calibrated to trade-specific needs.

The proposed e-RUPI voucher system under PM Vishwakarma, which would allow artisans to procure customized tools directly, is widely seen as a superior model that ODOP should adopt.

6.4 Financial Access and Sustainability

Despite the Margin Money Scheme's subsidy provisions, many small artisans continue to face difficulties accessing formal credit. Collateral requirements, low financial literacy, and limited banking penetration in rural areas collectively restrict the scheme's reach among the most economically vulnerable producers. Inadequate funding for Common Facility Centres in lower-income districts also constrains the quality of shared infrastructure available to enterprise clusters (Singh et al., 2022).

7. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The One District One Product scheme has, over its first six years of operation in Uttar Pradesh, demonstrated that a district-focused, product-specific economic development model can generate meaningful and measurable gains in skill formation, employment, and enterprise development. Its most significant achievements have been concentrated in districts with pre-existing artisanal traditions and institutional support-Moradabad, Varanasi, Agra, Aligarh, Lucknow-but the scheme has also catalyzed promising activity in districts like Jhansi and Banda that had limited prior manufacturing identity.

The scheme's success in formalizing craft knowledge through RPL certification, connecting producers to export markets through trade fairs and government platforms, and establishing a cadre of trained artisans who can transmit updated skills within their communities represents a meaningful institutional contribution. At the same time, the challenges identified in this paper-particularly around training duration, toolkit relevance, digital literacy, and financial access-point to a clear reform agenda.

7.1 Policy Recommendations

- Extend the standard training period to a minimum of 30 days, with options for part-time scheduling to accommodate wage-earners who cannot afford extended absences from productive work.
- Adopt an e-RUPI or voucher-based toolkit procurement model that allows artisans to obtain trade-specific tools rather than receiving standardized kits.
- Integrate digital literacy training as a mandatory component of all ODOP skill programs, with content tailored to e-commerce listing, digital payment management, and basic financial recordkeeping.
- Upgrade Common Facility Centres in lagging districts-particularly in Bundelkhand and Eastern UP-with advanced testing laboratories, design studios, and quality certification infrastructure.
- Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework that tracks training-to-enterprise conversion rates, enabling evidence-based adjustments to program design.
- Explore convergence with PM Vishwakarma and PMFME schemes to provide artisans with layered support that addresses skill, finance, and market access simultaneously.

Future research should extend this analysis to primary data collection across a representative sample of ODOP districts, with particular attention to long-term income trajectories, gender-disaggregated outcomes, and the comparative effectiveness of different training delivery models. A longitudinal study examining whether trained artisans sustain enterprise activity beyond the initial training period would be especially valuable for refining the scheme's design.

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