

Empowering Youth with Vocational Skill through Training in Clay Modelling

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ABSTRACT

Vocational Education and Vocational training are the skill-based education in a specific field which enables students to acquire training and practical skills in a specific discipline or trade, vocation or occupation through manual practice. Now a days, vocational training and vocational education is a crucial tool for youth empowerment, providing them with skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Among various vocational skills, clay modelling stands out as an innovative and artistic crafts that foster creativity, technical skills, and economic opportunities. It is an advantage as VET programs offer practical skills and hands on training that trains students for specific jobs. It prepares students to take up highly rewarding jobs and help them become independent at young age. Therefore, the Government of India offers many schemes to provide vocational training to the underprivileged or economically backward sections. A quality vocational education provided by skilled trainers will generate young and efficient workforce, which will contribute immensely to the progress of the nation. In this paper, the authors focused on growing needs of vocational education, its importance and various schemes offered by Government of India to promote vocational skills and the various benefits of vocational training. This article explores that how training in clay modeling can empower youth by enhancing their artistic abilities, providing self-employment opportunities, and preserving cultural heritage. It also discussed challenges faced in implementing such training and strategies for improving vocational education in this field. It is also present real-world case studies of successful clay modelling programs and highlights funding opportunities to support such initiatives.

Keywords – Youth Empowerment, Vocational Training, Clay modelling, skill development, entrepreneurship, creativity, cultural heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is a growing global issue, with many young people struggling to find work due to a lack of practical skills. Traditional education often does not provide hands-on learning that aligns with industry needs. Vocational training, which emphasizes skill-based education, offers a solution by equipping young people with marketable abilities. **Clay is a modelling tool so I think it allows children to ... express their thoughts and ideas with others at the table” (D Pilay, 20 May 2014).** Clay modelling, an ancient yet continually evolving craft, is one such skill that blends artistic expression with economic potential. **clay gives children another language for expressing their thoughts, ideas and emerging working theories about their world (Ministry of Education, 1996).** From traditional pottery to modern sculpting and product design, clay modelling provides young artisans with a path to financial independence and creative fulfillment.

Clay Modelling as a Vocational Skill

Clay modelling involves shaping and sculpting clay into functional or decorative items. It is widely used in pottery, sculpture, jewelry making, and industrial prototyping. Training in clay modelling teaches essential skills such as design, craftsmanship, and business management.

Skills Developed Through Clay Modelling

- Creativity and Innovation – Enhances artistic expression and problem-solving abilities.
- Hand-Eye Coordination and Dexterity – Improves fine motor skills, precision, and craftsmanship.
- Entrepreneurial and Business Skills – Teaches product marketing, pricing, and financial management.
- Cultural Awareness and Preservation – Helps preserve and modernize traditional craft techniques.

Applications of Clay Modelling

- Pottery and Ceramics – Making household items such as cups, plates, and vases.
- Sculpture and Figurines – Creating decorative statues and cultural artifacts.
- Jewelry and Accessories – Producing clay-based ornaments and beads.
- Industrial Prototyping – Designing models for architecture, automotive, and product manufacturing.

BENEFITS OF CLAY MODELLING IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Enhancing Employment Opportunities

Clay modelling provides skills applicable to both traditional and modern industries, from pottery businesses to digital sculpting and 3D modelling.

Promoting Entrepreneurship

With minimal investment, young artisans can establish small businesses, selling handmade products in local markets, art fairs, or online platforms like Etsy and Amazon Handmade.

Cultural Preservation and Heritage Promotion

Traditional clay crafts have deep cultural significance. Training in clay modelling helps preserve indigenous art forms while allowing artisans to innovate and modernize designs.

Mental and Emotional Well-being

Clay work is therapeutic, reducing stress, improving focus, and enhancing emotional well-being among youth, which contributes positively to mental health.

CASE STUDIES: SUCCESS STORIES IN CLAY MODELLING TRAINING

Case Study 1: The Blue Pottery Initiative, India

In Rajasthan, India, the Blue Pottery Initiative has trained over 500 young artisans in traditional clay techniques. The program, run by NGOs and government agencies, provides training, raw materials, and market access. Many graduates have started their own businesses, selling handmade pottery locally and internationally.

Case Study 2: Youth Pottery Cooperative, Kenya

A youth cooperative in Nairobi trains unemployed young people in clay modelling and pottery. With support from microfinance institutions, graduates receive startup funds to establish their own businesses. Many of them now supply handcrafted ceramic items to hotels and export markets.

Case Study 3: Clay Modelling for Therapy, USA

In the U.S., some vocational training programs integrate clay modelling into therapy for at-risk youth. Programs like ArtWorks for Youth combine skill-building with emotional healing, helping participants develop self-confidence while learning a marketable trade.

Case Study 4: Digital Clay Modelling for Animation, South Korea

In South Korea, digital clay modelling has gained popularity in the animation and gaming industry. Training centers teach youth how to sculpt clay figures, which are then digitized for use in video games and films. This modern approach to clay modelling has created job opportunities in the digital media sector.

Case Study 5: The Pottery Academy, Ghana

In Ghana, The Pottery Academy offers free training in both traditional and modern pottery techniques. Participants receive micro-loans to start their own businesses, supplying handcrafted ceramics to local hospitality industries.

Case Study 6: Women Empowerment Through Clay Art, Brazil

A Brazilian program focuses on training young women in clay modelling, enabling them to create jewelry and home décor items. Supported by NGOs and private enterprises, the initiative provides materials and an online sales platform, helping over 300 women achieve financial independence.

Case Study 7: 3D Clay Printing for Product Design, Germany

German vocational schools have integrated 3D clay printing into their curricula, merging traditional modelling with digital technology. This approach prepares students for careers in industrial design and architecture, with graduates finding opportunities in sectors like automotive design and home décor manufacturing.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CLAY MODELLING TRAINING

Lack of Resources and Infrastructure

Many vocational centers lack proper tools, kilns, and materials required for effective training.

Limited Market Access

Young artisans often struggle to compete with mass-produced goods, making it difficult to sustain their businesses.

Shortage of Skilled Trainers

A lack of experienced instructors hinders the effective transfer of advanced clay modelling techniques.

Social Perception and Economic Viability

Many people see clay modelling as a low-income craft rather than a profitable career, limiting youth interest.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE CLAY MODELLING TRAINING

Establishing Well-Equipped Training Centers

Governments and organizations should invest in training centers with modern kilns, quality clay, and proper tools.

Digital Marketing and E-Commerce Integration

Teaching youth how to sell handmade products online can expand their market reach and boost earnings.

Capacity Building for Trainers

Specialized programs for educators can ensure high-quality skill transfer in both traditional and modern clay modelling techniques.

Public Awareness Campaigns

Promoting clay modelling success stories can help change perceptions and encourage more youth to join training programs.

Funding Opportunities for Clay Modelling Training Programs

In India and abroad several organizations and government schemes provide financial assistance and support to artisans and practitioners of clay modelling. Here are some notable funding agencies and programs:

Ministry of Culture, Government of India

Scheme for Scholarships to Young Artists in Different Cultural Fields: This scheme offers scholarships to young artists (aged 18 to 25 years) to undergo advanced training in their respective fields, including traditional arts like clay modelling. The scholarship aims to support and encourage young talents in preserving and promoting India's cultural heritage.

Scheme of Financial Assistance for Promotion of Art and Culture: This scheme provides financial support to cultural organizations with a national presence for conducting various cultural activities, including workshops and exhibitions related to traditional arts and crafts. Organizations involved in clay modelling can apply for grants under this scheme.

Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Government of India

Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (GVY) – Pottery Activity: Under this scheme, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) promotes the pottery industry by providing training programs, distributing pottery wheels, and offering financial assistance for setting up units. The scheme aims to enhance the productivity and income of traditional pottery artisans.

Indian Ceramic Art Foundation (ICAF)

ICAF is a national, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting Indian ceramic art globally. It provides a platform for artists, educators, designers, and students to engage and collaborate. While ICAF primarily focuses on knowledge dissemination and networking, it also facilitates opportunities for artists to showcase their work, which can lead to funding and support.

Mrinalini Mukherjee Foundation

Mrinalini Mukherjee Creative Arts Grant: This annual visual arts grant supports Indian artists or collectives engaged in contemporary art practices, including those working with mediums like clay. The grant enables artists to explore new ideas and develop a body of work, contributing to the visual arts field with greater creative and technical proficiency.

State-Specific Schemes

Assistance to Traditional Pottery Makers (Kerala): The Backward Communities Development Department of Kerala offers financial assistance to traditional pottery makers belonging to the state's OBC category. The scheme provides ₹25,000 for purchasing modern machinery to upgrade their practices.

Artisans and practitioners are encouraged to explore these schemes and organizations to find suitable support for their clay modelling endeavors. Additionally, staying connected with local art councils and craft societies can provide information on region-specific grants and opportunities.

Government Grants and Support Programs

National Endowment for the Arts (USA): Offers grants supporting craft-based vocational training.

Creative Forces Community Engagement Grants: Provides funding for community-based arts projects that address the experiences of military-connected individuals.

Foundations and Non-Profit Organizations

The Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation: Awards grants to emerging artists specializing in traditional artistic practices, including clay modelling.

Marianne Oberg Scholarship Fund: Supports visual artists dedicated to ceramic art, offering financial assistance for their artistic development.

Microfinance and Crowdfunding Platforms

Kiva: Connects artisans with micro-loans to fund their creative enterprises.

GoFundMe and Kickstarter: Enable artists to raise funds for specific projects or business startups through public contributions.

Private Sector and Corporate Sponsorships

Artistic Innovations Grant by Mid-America Arts Alliance: Provides matching grants up to \$15,000 for artists and nonprofit arts organizations to create and present new work.

CONCLUSION

Clay modelling serves as a powerful vocational skill, empowering youth by enhancing employability, fostering entrepreneurship, and preserving cultural heritage. The presented case studies demonstrate the transformative impact of structured training programs. Access to various funding opportunities can further support the establishment and expansion of such initiatives, enabling young artisans to thrive both creatively and economically.

By investing in clay modelling training and providing financial support, stakeholders can contribute to sustainable development, cultural preservation, and the economic empowerment of youth worldwide

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